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OLBERMANN RULES!

WHY HE'S WHUPPING THE COMPETITION AND CHANGING THE FACE OF NEWS
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THE GOP'S IRAQ PROBLEM
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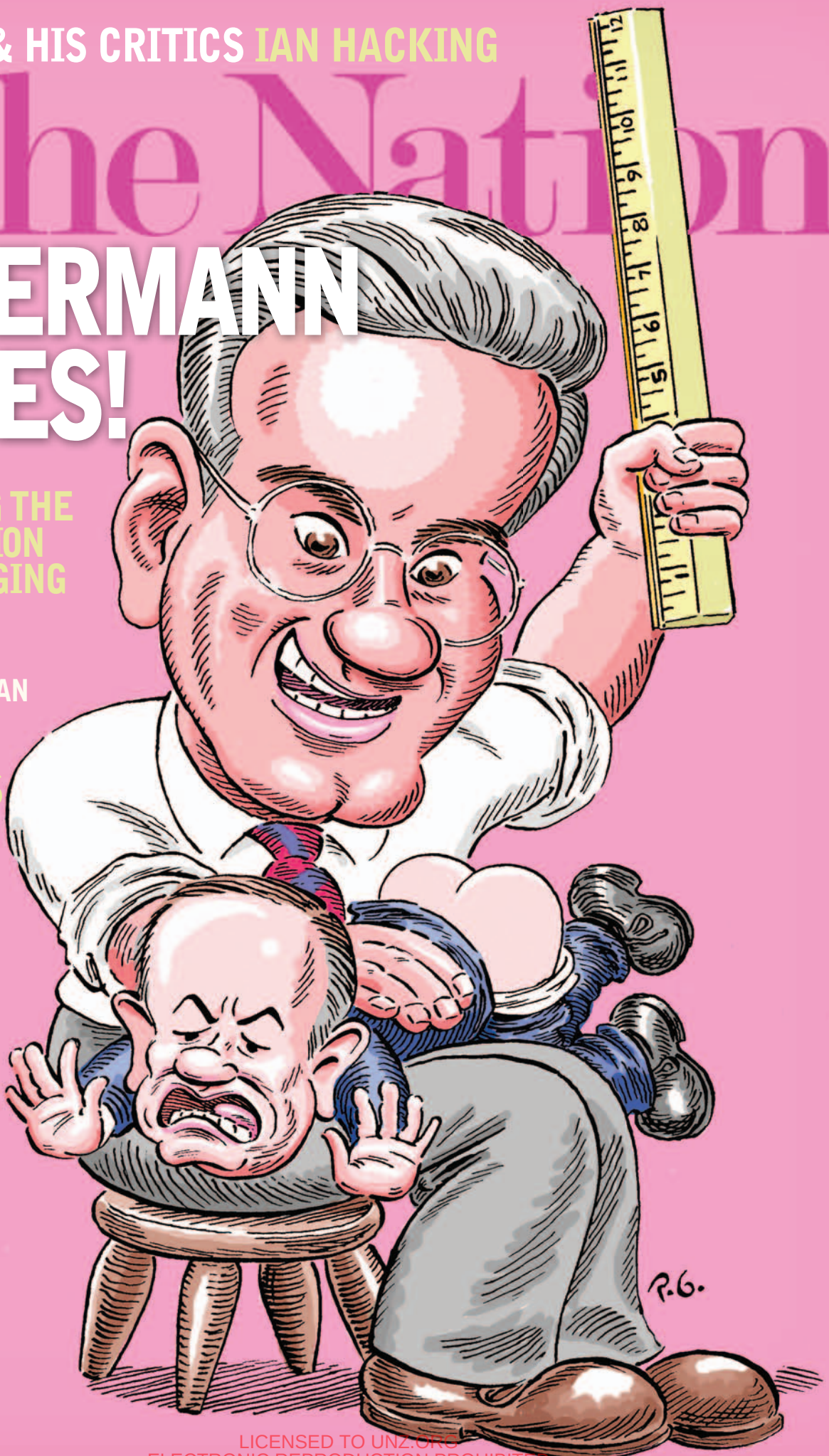

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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

PURPLE REIGN

New York City

■ Bob Moser's lead article "Purple America" [Aug. 13/20], about reaching Democrats in red states, is marvelous! I've been preaching this for years. We really can win in 2008!

RICHARD CALDERHEAD

Durham, NC

■ The Democrats' fifty-state strategy may be good for party-building and grassroots organizing, but it makes no sense to throw resources at states whose electoral votes are out of reach in 2008. "Purple America" exists only in fifteen to eighteen "swing" states. Bob Moser's home state, North Carolina, is firmly in the Republican column. Despite having a North Carolinian on the ticket in 2004, the Kerry/Edwards campaign barely improved its vote over Gore/Lieberman in 2000. The only way Democrats can carry "red" states in 2008 is if they are carrying the country by a landslide. And that's not in anyone's forecast. The best hope for a "purple America" is the National Popular Vote plan, which would make every vote equal in presidential elections.

LEE MORTIMER

Port Sanilac, Mich.

■ Bob Moser is right on the mark, as I can attest from personal experience. I was 2004 campaign manager for a candidate to the state legislature in a district that had never elected a Democrat. With a "grassroots blueprint" in the hands of 200 inspired volunteers, we beat on doors, handed out materials, marched in parades and put activists in most of our forty-eight precincts. The "experts" in Lansing said the numbers were against us, the Bushies would smother us, but as a token they would give us Palm Pilots (which never came). For less than half of what the opponent spent, our guy got 55 percent of the vote, and Bush got 55 percent. And our guy, of Hispanic heritage, won in a district that's 99 percent non-Hispanic. Just to show it was no fluke, in 2006 he won with 71 percent, and in the adjoining district (also never represented by a Democrat) the same blueprint was put into play and a Democrat won. Now Democrats control the Michigan House.

RAY DENISON

Douglassville, Pa.

■ Thanks, Bob Moser, for an excellent article about the accomplishments of the fifty-state strategy. It perfectly accords with my experience here in Berks County, a swing county composed of farms, the diverse city of Reading and suburbs of Philly. I became a precinct leader a year ago, after years of outside-the-party activism. A fellow Deaniac recruited me. For the first time in twenty years our little Republican precinct now has Democratic precinct leaders. Last summer, a dynamic new DNC organizer (a community-based hire) organized precinct leaders into regions by district. In the 2006 election, we chalked up victories in three out of four offices on the ballot, including winning our seat in the State Assembly, which had been Republican for twenty years. Statewide, Democrats won a new, one-seat majority in the Assembly.

Howard Dean has not only put organizers into the states; he has also inspired many of his supporters to run for office. Our local party is enlivened by many 2004 Deaniacs who are now precinct leaders and who may develop into candidates. Dean has also introduced the democratic you-own-it online organizing that fueled his campaign. Check out the Party Builder software at www.democrats.org; it enables you to establish an online profile, event announcements and groups, and to find and communicate with local Dems.

While the DNC was spending small amounts to help us build our local party in 2006, the DCCC wasted millions in poorly conceived direct mail and TV ads that turned off voters. The campaign in our 6th District was directed by Washington people we never saw and who did not know our region. And when the DC staffers left, they took all the volunteer databases—leaving us with nothing to build from for the next attempt to take back this Congressional seat. The DNC organizing efforts, by contrast, have both an immediate and a long-term focus, helping us to build local organizations that will carry over from one candidate and election year to the next.

CYNTHIA BAUGHMAN

Somers, N.Y.

■ "Purple America"—what a wonderfully written blueprint/battle plan/wakeup call to arms! I live in a place "owned" by Republicans forever. But in 2006 Democrats, using the tactics so well described in this article, took a Congressional seat away from a thirty-five-year GOP incumbent. We've already begun to plan the 2008 reelection of freshman Congressman John Hall, who has so rattled the Old Guard Republicans. They've targeted him like the terrorists they are because they can't abide a politician who represents the interests of those less wealthy than the Bush/Cheney bunch. I hope the Dems won't interfere with this movement. It's the best chance we have of saving the country. Let's not blow it!

E.A. WHITE

Nashville

■ Dems certainly need to be focusing their campaign with more effort in the Southern states. If you look at election history, nearly all Democratic Presidents either were from the South (i.e., Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter), or they won two or more Southern states in the Electoral College. Yet most Democrats seem to think "Dixie" is a dirty word. They seem afraid to come here. Here in Nashville, we always have a Democratic mayor and council, and Democrats dominate in the polls. I have also lived in other "liberal" cities, such as Louisville and Atlanta, where a lot of Democratic support remains unnoticed. Not everyone down here is happy with the Republican Party; I think it's time for Democratic candidates to show some appreciation, because Southern Dems are just as eager to give it back.

RACHEL HOOVER

letters@thenation.com

LETTING MANAGEMENT OFF THE HOOK?

Arlington, Mass.

■ Liza Featherstone's July 16/23 "Andy Stern: Savior or Sellout?"—her profile of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) president—does a good job of exposing the limits of labor-management healthcare "reform" coalitions based on the lowest common denominator (which, when Wal-Mart's involved, can be pretty low). As Featherstone gets Stern to admit, the only thing his corporate partners in Better Health Care Together are likely to agree on is that there's "a problem."

But the strategy of challenging management to work with labor on a real solution to the healthcare crisis has considerable merit. That's because some of the unionized firms involved in Stern's group are quite different from Wal-Mart. Thanks to decades of collective bargaining, companies like AT&T do provide comprehensive medical insurance for active and retired employees and their families. Like Detroit automakers, however, they now want to curtail this coverage, shift the costs to employees or unload their "legacy benefits" onto a risky, union-negotiated Voluntary Employees Beneficiary Association (VEBA).

These employers should be facing far greater pressure to support a single-payer solution. Just urging them—in the company of Wal-Mart—to endorse vague "principles of unity" about "universal coverage" is letting them off the hook politically (as do VEBAs). It also obscures the question of which proposed system of "healthcare for all" actually provides it.

To pressure politicians and employers effectively, unions must do more membership education and mobilization, plus public agitation, about replacing job-based health insurance with something that would indeed be

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COMMENT

Taking Power

The Constitution of the United States is a brilliant contraption, but the duel under way between Congress and the President over the war in Iraq has put some of its limitations on display. The document specifies that "Congress shall… declare War" (a provision that Congress seems to have forgotten) while assigning the President, as Commander in Chief, the power to wage the war thus declared (this provision is well remembered!). But the document offers no provision for cases in which the two branches disagree on the waging of a war already begun. No constitutional provision specifically assigns any branch of government the power to "undeclare" a war. Only Congress's power of the purse—that blunt instrument—seems up to the job. What if, for example, a President were to oppose a war that Congress ordered him to fight? Could the Commander in Chief successfully fight a war he did not believe in? That problem has never arisen, but now the opposite situation has developed, as it did once before, during the Vietnam War: Congress has turned against a war it once authorized, while the executive continues to insist on waging it.

Now in Democratic hands, Congress seeks to find a way to make its will felt in the face of George W. Bush's seemingly implacable resolve to "stay the course" in Iraq. One serious problem is that if, fearful of demanding a true end to the war, Congress merely tries to influence the war's conduct by issuing guidelines, passing resolutions, demanding certain changes in the military mission and such, then it creates two "deciders" regarding the conduct of the war—a situation that even the warmest advocate of separation of powers will find dubious. Republicans may have a point when they say Congress should not merely *interfere* in the decisions of the Commander in Chief but should either defund the war altogether or stay out of it.

And yet if, to create unity, the Democrats in Congress join with moderate Republicans around a cosmetic compromise—as many seem tempted to do—they will have embraced the worst of all possible worlds. For example, Senator Jack Reed announced in his response to Bush's September address to the nation on the war that a Democratic plan would focus "on counterterrorism and training the Iraqi army." Such a proposal—easily interpreted by the Administration to justify everything it is doing—would be a de facto acquiescence to the Bush policy. It could create a policy quagmire to match the quagmire on the ground in Iraq. For example, if the military launched operations supposedly to counter terror but actually to quell civil war, would Congress demand their cessation? Could it? By what means? Moreover, the unity such a policy would produce would be strictly a Congressional affair. It would nullify the public's will, clearly expressed in the 2006 elections as well as subsequent opinion polls, to end the war. We are often warned not to "politicize" the war. If that means politicians should not use the war for partisan advantage, the advice is sound. Yet in a deeper sense, politics is the way a democracy conducts its business. It is the means the public is given for making basic decisions facing the nation. If the Democrats close ranks with the Bush Administration around a policy that continues the war, the fundamental purpose of the Constitution—to provide a mechanism for government by the people—will have been thwarted. Without politics, there is no democracy.

Some Democrats point out, quite correctly, that the 2006 election has not given them the votes to prevail with a war-ending

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COMMENT

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policy. As everyone knows, a majority vote in the Senate will not suffice; sixty votes are required to cut off a Republican filibuster, and sixty-seven to overcome a presidential veto. It is true that a cutoff of funds requires only fifty-one votes, but this decisive measure is also likely to lose support among middle-of-the road Democrats, and thus, for the time being, fail. (They are mortally afraid that a cutoff in funds would leave them open to the charge, baseless as it is, that they are refusing to "support the troops," as if a fund cutoff were a proposal not to bring the troops home safe and sound but a formula to leave them in the field while depriving them of food, ammunition and armor.) Even so, it would be far better for the Democrats as a party to stand fast for the complete withdrawal of American troops. They would then try to win over wavering Republicans (as well as fellow Democrats) in Congress. In the background would be the people's will—the threat of electoral defeat of the Republicans, both for the executive and legislative offices, in 2008. In short, the Democrats should "politicize" the war in the best sense of that word. It probably will not end while Bush is in office (unless Republican support for it in Congress erodes under pressure of public opinion), but the foundation would be laid for a grand decision by the people in the 2008 election.

Nothing about such a policy would be easy, politically or substantively. It would involve a frank acknowledgment that Congress had decided not just to influence the President but actually to supplant his will with its own. In the event (however unlikely) that a filibuster or veto was overridden, or a funding cutoff was passed, Congress would no longer be "interfering" with the President's role as Commander in Chief but superseding it. Congress would be telling Bush, "You are still the Commander in Chief, but we are taking away your war." The President might, of course, defy Congress. If his past behavior is any guide, he probably would. In that case, the country would face a full-blown constitutional crisis. But the truth is that the country is already in a muffled, slow-motion constitutional crisis—one that only Bush is fighting and therefore constantly winning. The outcome of an open confrontation would not be pre-ordained. But if there is no fight, there can be no victory. And at present we are sleepwalking into one-man rule.

If Congress were ready to take responsibility in this dramatic way, it would need to step beyond its role as opposition and assume the full burden and accountability of power. First it would have to abandon the fantasy—as imaginary as Bush's ideas of victory—that it will suffice to "redeploy" US troops, as if a rearrangement of American forces in Iraq can accomplish the political goals that four and a half years of bloody war have failed to achieve. (The word "redeploy" is of course just a miserable euphemism for the good, clear English word "withdraw.") The plan supported by Senator Reed makes this mistake. Likewise, the Democrats would have to abandon the idea that a "residual" force could be left behind to fight terrorism and train Iraqi forces. The 160,000 troops now in Iraq are unable to accomplish these things. How would, say, 50,000 manage it? To withdraw is to acknowledge the failure of the American mission in Iraq. The war in the fall of 2007 is like Enron in the fall of 2001—the bankruptcy has

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COMMENT

long since occurred, irreversibly, and only the facade of a going enterprise remains. A high price must be paid. No policy can make any sense unless this elemental truth is acknowledged.

Above all, the Democrats would have to face up to the likelihood—if not the inevitability—that a complete withdrawal of US forces would be followed by a larger-scale civil war than is already occurring. So far Democrats have, to their own peril, left it to Republicans to warn of this obvious danger. For the Republicans are not only defending current policy but establishing the predicate for a stab-in-the-back accusation following a possible Democrat-led withdrawal. They will throw Democratic assurances that withdrawal was the path to success back in their faces. Democrats said everything would be fine, Republicans will charge, but they have brought expanded slaughter and a wider civil war. The Democratic answer, which must be articulated immediately, well before the fact, is that a larger disaster may indeed be in the offing but that if it comes it will be the result not of withdrawal—for staying can only protract the disaster and postpone the reckoning—but of the decision to go into Iraq in the first place.

Senator Barack Obama, who bravely opposed the launch of the war, has put forward an elaborate proposal for withdrawal that involves the United Nations and regional powers to create a unified government in Iraq. His plan, or something like it, is worth trying. But while to hope that withdrawal plus international assistance will "pressure" the Iraqis to reconcile is just barely reasonable, to assume this miracle and promise it to the public is folly. Senator John Kerry, for example, fell into this trap when he said the Democrats' plan was one that would "make Iraq successful." That promise propels the Democrats straight into the jaws of the stab-in-the-back accusation being prepared by Republicans. Democrats instead should argue that with every month that the United States stays in Iraq, the likelihood and magnitude of an unchecked Iraqi civil war grows rather than diminishes. If we look back at the war so far, they should point out, American withdrawal at any given moment would have given Iraq a better chance than at any later moment.

Failure to acknowledge these hard truths would be a sign that the Democrats are not, after all, ready to make serious decisions and assume the responsibilities of power. They will then evoke—and deserve—the disdain of the public that is already becoming manifest in the polls. JONATHAN SCHELL

Politicize the War

Indulge me, for a moment, in a hypothetical. Imagine that a deeply unpopular Democratic President is attempting to persuade a skeptical Congress to undertake a massive restructuring of the American economy, a full-scale expansion of the welfare state that would require taxes to be tripled. Since his credibility lies in ruins, the President hands the task of selling the plan to a career IRS accountant with an imposing Roman-sounding name and a reputation as a brilliant economist. With bated breath, the press awaits the testimony of Accountant Augustus, who over four hours of testimony uses a bevy of charts and graphs to argue that, in his technical, expert opinion, the size of the government should be tripled.

It's a preposterous scenario, of course, but it highlights some central absurdities of the debate over the war in Iraq. The Bush Administration, which has politicized nearly the entire federal government and subverted the expert opinions of career civil servants to the partisan agenda of their appointed bosses at every turn, now thinks politics should have absolutely nothing to do with deciding whether to engage in a twenty-first-century imperial occupation of a country of 20 million. According to the White House, the war and its duration are technical matters, best left to the judgment of a career Army officer with strong credentials.

And yet despite the manifest absurdity of this position, the real-life version of this hypothetical more or less worked, managing to forestall, yet again, any serious defections among Republicans from the now-explicit White House policy of passing off the occupation to the President's successor. Why? The answer has a lot to do with a cultural and political ethos that's come to dominate our national conversation, what might best be called the Cult of the Soldier.

It's not surprising that during a time of war, civilians and politicians hold an elevated opinion of the nobility and valor of warriors. After all, it is ostensibly for our collective benefit that a tiny fraction of American citizens voluntarily endure (over and over) some of the worst horrors of human existence as both the target of violence and its implacable agent. But the Cult of the Soldier is something more than mere gratitude or appreciation. It's the insidious belief that since warriors transcend the petty and corrupt world of politics, they are uniquely equipped to make the nation's decisions about war and peace. In a *New York Times*/CBS News poll in mid-September, 68 percent of respondents said they most trusted the US military commanders to successfully resolve the Iraq War, as opposed to 21 percent for Congress and 5 percent for the Bush Administration.

Such attitudes are the inevitable result of both political parties and both sides of the war debate reinforcing the notion that the legitimacy of one's argument about the war derives from its proximity to those in uniform—from Bush's infamous flight suit landing on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, to John Kerry's "reporting for duty" campaign as war hero, to the antiwar movement's persistent focus on the fact that almost none of the neocons who argued for the war have served in the military. Each side tallies up its stock of current and former warriors advocating its position, and since the military is a massive, heterogeneous organization, it's not surprising to find plenty of advocates for nearly every conceivable position. (In fact, the *Washington Post* recently reported that Gen. David Petraeus's direct supervisor, Adm. William Fallon, thinks Petraeus is dead wrong and that we should begin withdrawing troops in a far speedier fashion.)

In sending General Petraeus to Capitol Hill, the White House was trying to have it both ways: to smuggle in a radical and unpopular agenda under the sainted mantle of an outstanding soldier. When MoveOn called this move bullshit by taking out a full-page ad in the *Times* accurately pointing out that Petraeus was "cooking the books" to paint a rosy picture, not only Republicans but the majority of mainstream pundits acted as if the group had violated an unspoken taboo. The

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Washington Post's Richard Cohen sniffed that the ad "recalls the ugly McCarthy era," adding that "MoveOn.org and the late senator from Wisconsin share a certain fondness for the low blow."

MoveOn's "General Betray Us" ad may have been tactically stupid, but the central point the ad made was sound. When it comes to the debate over whether or not we are going to continue this disastrous and deadly war, there is no neutral, technical, nonpolitical authority to appeal to. Petraeus is as enmeshed in politics as the senators he faced.

We keep hearing from all quarters that there is no military solution in Iraq, only a political one. It's half true. There is, indeed, no military solution, but the political solution isn't to be found among the deadlocked factions in Iraq's Parliament. The ultimate political solution is here in the United States. The only way to end the war is to use the tools of politics to force our government to accede to the will of the majority of Americans, who want to get out of Iraq. Just as deciding how high marginal tax rates should be is fundamentally a political question, so too is the question of how long we will continue to occupy Iraq. War is not some special category of policy that stands outside democratic accountability. Indeed, it is in bringing the self-perpetuating logic of war to heel that the often degrading business of democratic politics finds one of its most noble callings.

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Christopher Hayes, a Nation *contributing writer and a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute, is a senior editor of* In These Times.

Let the CHIPs Fall…

If ever there was a motherhood and apple pie issue, reauthorizing the popular State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) is it. Yet the Bush Administration, right-wing think tanks and health insurance companies have managed to turn a no-brainer into a pitched battle over the direction of healthcare reform, jeopardizing the future of S-CHIP itself. The fight over S-CHIP, which must be renewed by September 30, reflects deep divisions in Washington and shows the difficulties of making improvements in the healthcare system.

By every measure, the ten-year-old program—passed during the Clinton Administration as a bipartisan, incremental effort to expand health coverage to millions of poor kids—has been a success. Thanks to S-CHIP, the number of low-income uninsured kids dropped by one-third over the decade, even as the number of uninsured adults went up. Three out of four eligible kids participate, and studies show they receive preventive care and have improved health outcomes and school performance. "It has been the only success story in initiatives to improve healthcare access," says Cindy Mann, who directs Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families.

S-CHIP enjoys broad support among Democratic and Republican governors. Its flexibility allows states to tailor their own programs or build on existing Medicaid arrangements to target children typically in families with incomes of up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (about $41,300 for a family of four this year). Last year 91 percent of kids on S-CHIP lived in families with incomes at or below that amount. States have stepped in to fill a gap the federal government has refused to address: Nineteen states target or plan to target kids from families whose income is greater than 250 percent of the poverty rate, and some cover pregnant women and parents of eligible kids, a strategy that has proved successful in reaching more children.

What's wrong with this picture? It doesn't square with the right's ideology or the profit goals of the insurance industry, which has the upper hand in Congress. This summer the House and Senate passed bills reauthorizing S-CHIP, but by mid-September it became clear that the House bill, which added 5 million uninsured kids to the rolls and paid for their coverage partly by cutting government overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans, would lose to the more minimal Senate approach. Giving health insurance to more kids instead of overpaying highly profitable insurance companies seemed like a good trade. But the Senate, lobbied all year by the insurance industry, didn't see it that way.

The Senate bill covers only 4 million uninsured children, paying for the coverage with a 61-cent increase in the tobacco tax. It also retains the government handouts to insurance companies, which receive on average 12 percent more than it costs Medicare to provide benefits to seniors under the traditional program [see Lieberman, "The Medicare Privatization Scam," July 16/23]. Influential GOP senators, targeted by sellers of Medicare Advantage plans heavily marketed in rural areas, are adamantly against cuts to Medicare Advantage. "It's very frustrating to see a phenomenal House bill and then move toward the Senate bill," says a spokesperson for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Negotiators say the issue of overpayments will be taken up later this year, when Congress must consider whether to implement scheduled cuts in Medicare payments to doctors, a fight that will pit doctors against insurance companies. But the insurance lobby has won this round.

Neither the House nor the Senate bill covers all the children in need. Nearly 9 million kids now have no health insurance, and up to two-thirds of them are eligible for S-CHIP or Medicaid. Even

CALVIN TRILLIN

BUSH ON IRAQ

"Return on success! Return on success!"
Yes, that was the theme of Bush's address:
The surge worked so well we'll soon fight this war
With only the force we had there before.
The slogan is new, the policy's tired.
The slogan should be, "Well folks, we're still mired."

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so, for the Scrooge in the White House, both bills cover too many children. He has threatened to veto any bill, labeling the expansion a step toward "government-run healthcare." Never mind that S-CHIP kids get care from private doctors or managed-care organizations that contract with the government, just as Medicare beneficiaries do. The Senate bill puts $35 billion more into financing S-CHIP; the House bill would have added $50 billion. Bush would add only $5 billion, not even enough to maintain the 6 million kids who are currently covered.

The Administration is taking no chances. To make sure that more kids will go without health insurance, in August it short-circuited the legislative process, issuing a "guidance" that makes it almost impossible for states to expand coverage to kids in families whose incomes are above 250 percent of the poverty level unless the state can show that 95 percent of children in families under 200 percent are enrolled, a standard that's unachievable for a voluntary program (participation in Medicare Part B is about 93 percent, and enrollment is automatic). The number of uninsured children has started to climb again, as employers continue to drop coverage for their parents. Loss of employer coverage has declined for families at all income levels targeted by S-CHIP expansions.

The guidelines halt expansions already under way in states like Oklahoma and Louisiana, which had approved eligibility for kids from families whose incomes are at 300 percent of the poverty level, and in Vermont, where more than 2,000 children from families with incomes between 225 and 300 percent of poverty will lose their insurance. "It's really outrageous," says Alan Weil, executive director of the National Academy for State Health Policy. "The dirty secret is that the Administration had been approving states to do what they have now told them not to do."

Apparently the Administration prefers to unleash families into the Darwinian jungle of the private insurance market, where only the wealthiest and healthiest can buy a policy. Public programs like S-CHIP, it argues, "crowd out" insurance sold by WellPoint and United Healthcare, depriving them of profits they earn selling coverage to S-CHIP families. Meanwhile, each year medical insurance consumes a greater share of family income. The truth is that most families can't afford those policies. The price for family coverage now averages $12,000, or about 20 percent of income for a family of four with income at 300 percent of the poverty level.

Families can, of course, buy one of the new bare-bones policies, such as the one sold in Ohio by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield with deductibles ranging from $4,000 to $20,000 ($8,000 to $40,000 if the family uses out-of-network providers). The policy covers only two doctor visits per year, and families must pay 30 percent of any hospital bill after satisfying the deductible. Pity the family whose child suffers recurring strep infections or needs an emergency appendectomy. Insurers also have long lists of health conditions people cannot have if they hope to get coverage. If poor kids have asthma, were born prematurely or are prone to ear infections, they're out of luck.

The realities of the health insurance marketplace have not stopped the "educational" efforts on Capitol Hill by right-wing think tanks, which have provided the ideological muscle for the assault on S-CHIP. Their rhetoric has reached the point of silliness; one recent memo on the Heritage Foundation website is titled "The House S-CHIP Bill: Enlisting States as Agents of Government Dependency." The Cato Institute held a briefing called "Sinking S-CHIP: A First Step Toward Stopping the Growth of Government Health Programs." Heritage and the American Legislative Exchange Council called their briefing "S-CHIP Expansion: Bad for Kids, Families, and Taxpayers." They are equating healthcare for poor kids with socialism. If that's the case, our children will be the first casualties on the way to marketplace perfection. TRUDY LIEBERMAN

Trudy Lieberman, who writes frequently for The Nation *on health policy, is director of the health and medicine reporting program at the Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY.*

The Richardson Surge

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson was supposed to be the cautious candidate Democrats respected but never got excited about. With his extensive diplomatic experience and his hunger for a return to the national stage—if not as a realistic candidate for the presidency then as a top vice presidential prospect or the next Secretary of State—the man who served as Bill Clinton's Energy Secretary and United Nations ambassador was tagged at the time of his January announcement as a deliberate, capable but almost certainly inconsequential contender for the 2008 nomination. But Richardson has refused to play his assigned role, and with an unexpectedly resolute antiwar stance and a freewheeling campaign style that distinguishes him from the field's punch-pulling frontrunners, he is the first member of the race's "also-ran" pack to elbow his way from the margin of error to the verge of serious competition.

Richardson's edgy, opinionated and at times risky high-wire campaign has gained him double-digit poll numbers in the first primary state, New Hampshire, where he has begun to attract endorsements from key local Democrats and favorable reviews from the state's influential newspapers. One recent New Hampshire poll put him ahead of John Edwards. A summer survey of Democrats in the first caucus state by Iowa's *Des Moines Register* had Richardson in front of Barack Obama and just five points behind Hillary Clinton as the choice of the most likely caucusgoers. In Nevada, another early caucus state, Richardson's support has grown from 2 percent in March polling to 11 percent in August. *(Continued on Page 24)*

BLOOD FOR OIL? SAY IT AIN'T SO!

After it provoked a mini-furor, recently retired Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan partially retracted the reasonable claim, in his memoir *The Age of Turbulence*, that "the Iraq War is largely about oil." For a look at Greenspan's tendency to rearrange facts, see William Greider's "The Lies of Alan Greenspan" at www.thenation.com.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Fidel, You Got the Wrong Conspiracy

I never thought there'd come a time when, even for a moment, I'd trust Fidel Castro less than a chairman of the Federal Reserve. But it's happened. Fidel turns out to be a 9/11 conspiracist, while former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan says the US attack on Iraq was "largely about oil." Win a few, lose a few.

These days, instead of charging around Cuba, Fidel is resting up and writing columns or, given his style, dictating them. On the anniversary of 9/11 he served up a 4,256-worder. Maximum leaders scoff at the editor's blue pencil. The whole slab of drivel was read out by a Cuban television presenter.

It turns out Castro's joined at the hip with David Ray Griffin. Castro says the Pentagon was hit by a rocket, not a plane, because no traces were found of its passengers. "Only a projectile could have created the geometrically round orifice created by the alleged airplane," according to Fidel. "We were deceived as well as the rest of the planet's inhabitants." All nonsense, of course. They found remains of the passengers who were on the plane that hit the Pentagon—teeth and other bits traced through DNA. In fact, as I've written before, hundreds of people saw the plane, people who know the difference between a plane and a cruise missile. The wreckage of the plane was hauled out from the site.

Maybe Castro subscribes to the theory that Flight 77 was actually hijacked and taken to Barksdale AFB in Louisiana, where George W. Bush made a documented stopover after his morning session in the Florida schoolroom. Bush personally machine-gunned the passengers, who were then cremated and the remains given to Cheney and Rumsfeld, who duly returned to the wreckage in the Pentagon and dropped the teeth and other bits through holes in their trouser pockets.

Maximum leaders like Castro are conspiracists by disposition. Since they are control freaks, the random and the accidental are alien to their frame of reference. If it happened, it happened for a reason. And if a bad thing happened, it was very probably a conspiracy. Anyway, Fidel has every right to see a CIA man behind every bush and a plot behind every cocktail cherry. In his case it was true. I doubt there's been a day in the history of the CIA since 1958 when there wasn't a file somewhere in the agency's HQ in Langley labeled "Castro Disposal Plans (Current)."

Greenspan has been having a field day publicizing his memoir *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World*. The line about the war being largely for oil was clearly written for his press release. The book doesn't amplify the idea. But he's right. Oil, among other factors, did have something to do with it. Meanwhile, the 81-year-old Greenspan escapes vilification and public indictment as a prime sponsor of a plot against American security far more deadly than the 9/11 onslaught Castro attributes to the US government.

It's amazing to see Greenspan waltz through TV interviews like the one the docile Lesley Stahl conducted with him on *60 Minutes*. I yearned for the shade of an old-line populist like Representative Wright Patman to shimmer up in the studio, take Greenspan by the throat and shake a confession out of him about the ruin he wrought. It was Greenspan, along with Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, who promoted the whole wave of deregulation that produced the fake boom of the 1990s and, in recent years, the explosion in speculative instruments that are now vaporizing.

There's decorum in the interviews of Greenspan, even as he bleats that he didn't foresee the housing bubble and the devastation now being wrought across America by the subprime mortgage binge.

Greenspan couldn't possibly have missed what was coming with the housing and mortgage market crisis. For anyone who was paying the slightest bit of attention, the housing bubble has been obvious for years. Just as the stock market bubble of the late 1990s—what Greenspan himself called "irrational exuberance"—was also obvious. As Robert Pollin, who devastates Greenspan in his book on the Clinton years, *Contours of Descent*, says, "The main point with Greenspan is that he saw these things, but deliberately chose not to do anything about them. He wouldn't act to rein in either bubble because that would mean challenging the prerogatives of Wall Street. Greenspan wasn't about to do that."

But again as Pollin points out in his book, there is another angle on Greenspan, which has been absent in the comments on his memoir, and is probably absent in the memoir itself. Greenspan's single greatest claim to "maestro" status is that he managed to hold down inflation while unemployment fell below 5 percent after the mid-1990s and even below 4 percent at the end of his friend Clinton's tenure. Mainstream economic theory had been putting out the story for years that unemployment couldn't fall below 6 percent—then it was 5.5 percent—without setting off uncontrollable inflation. Greenspan seemed to have figured out how to defy iron laws of what Milton Friedman termed the "natural rate of unemployment." But as Greenspan himself has acknowledged, the main factor here was quite straightforward, what Bob Woodward reported Greenspan as calling the "traumatized worker" effect.

Now, Greenspan didn't just hypothesize—he celebrated. In his notorious comment in July 1997 in Congressional testimony, he saluted the economy's performance as "extraordinary" and "exceptional," then remarked that a major factor contributing to this achievement was "a heightened sense of job insecurity and, as a consequence, subdued wage gains."

Thus, for Greenspan, a "heightened sense of job insecurity" creating "traumatized workers" was a cause for celebration. This from the country's—and by extension, the world's—most important economic policy-maker. We can safely assume that Greenspan doesn't bother to express troubled reminiscences about this part of his legacy.

So, comrade Fidel, get working on the Greenspan conspiracy. You've got 1,500 words. ■

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KATHA POLLITT

Poverty Is Hazardous to Your Health

The four of us were just about to sit down to a delicious end-of-summer dinner of grilled pork ribs and corn on the cob when the phone rang. It was for my friend, Dr. Michele Barry, Yale medical school professor and chief of one of the teaching wards at Yale-New Haven Hospital, who was on call that weekend. "Tell me what's the matter," she said into the receiver, using her reassuring, unfazable doctor voice. "Hmm-hmm. And how long has this been a problem?" Michele left the room briefly to continue the conversation, and when she came back she was in full exasperated-at-the-system mode. The patient, mother of a month-old baby, was crying on the phone because for the past two days she had been tormented by head lice (*Pediculosis capitis*, if you really want to know). A simple problem, you might think—head lice is endemic among schoolchildren, as many a parent could tell you—and one that hardly needs a high-powered medical consultation. You just go to the drugstore, buy a bottle of Nix (permethrin) over the counter and spend a lot of time with that little plastic comb. But Nix costs $22.99, and this woman didn't have it. By then it was Saturday night, and the drugstores in her neighborhood were closed until Monday. Fortunately, there was an all-night pharmacy, so Michele prescribed her permethrin, which Medicaid would pay for. She does the same thing for women with yeast infections who can't afford $16 for the over-the-counter Monistat: She prescribes terazol (a much more expensive medication), which is covered by Medicaid.

You can see this incident as a tiny illustration of the penny-wise, pound-foolish complexities of our bizarre healthcare system, in which routine problems are treated as full-blown emergencies, and the government will pay for prescriptions but not over-the-counter medications that may be cheaper and work just as well. The President asserted that there's no healthcare crisis, because anyone can just go to the emergency room if they need care. He's wrong—ERs don't give ongoing or preventive treatment; they just patch you up in a crisis. But to the extent that ERs and free services like Yale's have become the family doctor or the CVS for low-income people, that is the problem, because they're incredibly expensive. This is the system its defenders claim we must keep because single-payer health insurance would bankrupt the nation.

But this is also a story about the way poverty and health are intertwined. If you are reading this, chances are good that you can put your hands on $22.99. It's not a huge amount of money—it's pizza and beer for two, a hardcover book, two tickets to the movies. But there are a lot of people like Dr. Michele's patient, for whom $22.99 might as well be $122.99. They just don't have it when they need it. Even the co-pays on lifesaving prescription drugs can be too much for them. "I have patients who say to me that they can't afford to get both the diabetes and the heart meds, so they're just getting one this month," says Dr. Mark Cullen, also a Yale professor of medicine, and Dr. Michele's husband.

Forget, too, the other things so necessary to good health that the rest of us take for granted. Fresh fruits and vegetables—try even finding these in an inner-city neighborhood. Clean air—poor neighborhoods are notoriously the most polluted. Safe streets. Housing in good repair. A life with no more than the ordinary amount of stress. Well, you'd be stressed out too if you couldn't afford to get rid of your head lice. What else can't Dr. Michele's patient afford if she can't afford that? Try school supplies and books for her child in a few years. Try vitamins and a good breakfast every morning.

We hear a lot these days about the struggles of the middle class. Remember M2E2—Medicaid, Medicare, education, environment—the mnemonic New Democrats adopted after the Republicans took Congress in 1994? Except for the minimum wage, even progressives now routinely frame their policies around middle-class concerns—homeownership, college loans, Social Security, affordable health insurance. (I'm not saying low-income people don't need these things too, just that they are politically salient because the middle class cares about them, as it does not care, for example, about the inner city, school integration or prison reform.) John Edwards is about the only presidential candidate who mentions the 36.5 million Americans—12.3 percent—who fall below the poverty line ($10,488 for a single person, $20,444 for a family of four), and the additional 19 percent who are what sociologist Katherine Newman calls the near poor—100 to 200 percent above the poverty line. Only Edwards talks about the need to eradicate poverty, which he claims would take thirty years. So far his antipoverty platform has mostly reaped him charges of hypocrisy in the media for having a big house and getting expensive haircuts, as if there has to be something fishy about a rich man who campaigns against poverty and asks for poor people's votes. It's as if all the media talked about in 1932 was FDR's cigarette holder. A cigarette holder! Who does he think he is?

Dr. Michele's patient is lucky—she has free healthcare, and from top doctors too. What she obviously doesn't have is enough money to live on. Any emergency, and every life has them, could push her and her baby into homelessness. Significantly, affordable housing is not on the progressive agenda (affordable mortgages is something else—that's "homeownership," a middle-class shibboleth). Yet we are still facing a severe affordable-housing shortage. The rule of thumb is that a person should pay no more than 30 percent of his or her income for housing, which means that someone at the poverty level should be paying $262 a month, max. According to the 2006 Census, only 5.6 percent of New Haven's rentable housing units cost $299 per month or less. Given that 21 percent of New Havenites are below the poverty line, the vast majority of them must be doubling and tripling up, or paying far too much of their income for housing.

If Edwards has a plan to lift out of poverty Dr. Michele's patient and the millions like her, I don't care if his locks are as luxuriant as Little Lord Fauntleroy's. ■

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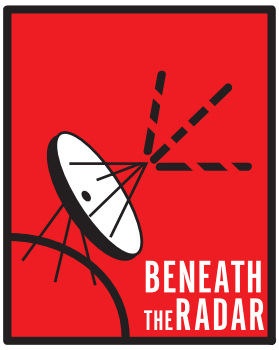
GARY YOUNGE

'Jena Is America'



In the alleyway between de jure and de facto, Jim Crow conceived a son. Even though the deed took place in broad daylight, everybody tried not to notice, and in time some would even try to pretend it hadn't happened. For most of his long life, Jim Crow Sr. had been a powerful and respected man. His word was law, his laws were obeyed and those who transgressed were punished without mercy. But in his dotage these crude and brutal ways became a liability. Finally, and after some protest, he was banished. Some claimed he had died. But nobody found the body.

Junior, meanwhile, was adopted by a local family and raised with all the refinement and courtesy that his father never had. While the father had railed against the changes that ousted him, the son adapted to them. But he cultivated the same allies and pursued the same goals, and in time he too would become powerful and respected. With little use for curse words or ostentatious displays of authority, he was most effective when not drawing attention to himself.

Over the past year the small town of Jena, Louisiana, has vividly established the genealogical link between the two generations of Jim Crow. Paradoxically it has taken the symbolism of the old—complete with nooses and all-white juries—for the nation to engage with the substance of the new: the racial inequalities in America's penal and judicial systems. For what is truly shocking about Jena is not that it has happened here but that the most egregious aspects of it are happening all across America every day. Go into any courthouse in any city and you will see it playing out. Like Rodney King, Hurricane Katrina or Sean Bell, it has revealed to the rest of the country what black America already knows. "If the media wasn't watching what was going on then every last one of those kids would be in jail right now," says Tina Jones, the mother of Bryant Purvis, who was there when the recent round of trouble started.

Fittingly for a post–civil rights story, it began with the discrepancy between what you are allowed to do and what you can do. In August last year, Kenneth Purvis asked the principal at Jena High School if he could sit under the "white tree"—a place in the school courtyard where white students hung out during break. The principal said Purvis could sit where he liked. So the next day he went with his cousin Bryant and stood under the tree. The morning after that three nooses dangled from the tree.

The overwhelmingly white school board judged the nooses a youthful prank and punished the culprits with brief suspensions. Black parents and students were angry, and months of racial tension followed. Police were called to the school several times because of fights between black and white students.

The principal called an assembly at which the local district attorney, Reed Walters, warned, "See this pen? I can end your lives with the stroke of a pen." The black students say he was looking at them when he said it; Walters denies it.

In an unsolved arson case, a wing of the school was burned down. A few days later, Justin Sloan, a white man, attacked black students who tried to go to a white party in town. Sloan was charged with battery and put on probation. A few days after that a white boy pulled a gun on three black students in a convenience store. One of the black students wrestled the gun from him and took it home, only to find himself charged with theft of a firearm, second-degree robbery and disturbing the peace. The white student who produced the gun was not charged.

On December 4, in school, a group of black students attacked a white student, Justin Barker, after they heard him bragging about a racial assault his friend had made. Barker, 17, had a concussion and his eye was swollen shut. He spent a few hours in the hospital and on his release went to a party, where friends described him as "his usual smiling self."

The six black students were arrested and charged with attempted second-degree murder—a charge that requires the use of a deadly weapon. Walters argued that the sneakers used to kick Barker were indeed deadly weapons. Mychal Bell, 17, became the first of what are now known as the Jena Six to be convicted on reduced charges by an all-white jury, and he faced up to twenty-two years in jail. His black court-appointed attorney called no witnesses and offered no defense. Bell's conviction was overturned by an appeals court, which ruled that he shouldn't have been tried as an adult. At the time of this writing he sits in jail waiting to hear his fate, and a huge civil rights march is set to descend on Jena.

These incidents have turned Jena into a national symbol of racial injustice. As such it is both a potent emblem and a convenient whipping boy. Potent because it shines a spotlight on how race and class conspire to deny black people equality before the law. According to the Justice Department, blacks are almost three times as likely as whites to have their cars searched when they are pulled over and more than twice as likely to be arrested. They are more than five times as likely as whites to be sent to jail and are sentenced to 20 percent longer jail time. This would not be a problem for the likes of Kobe Bryant, but in Jena's "quarters" high-powered legal teams are hard to come by.

Convenient because it allows the rest of the nation to dismiss the incidents as the work of Southern redneck backwoodsmen without addressing the systemic national failures it showcases. According to the Sentencing Project, the ten states with the highest discrepancy between black and white incarceration rates include Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York and none from the South. What took place in Jena is not aberrant; it's consistent. The details are a local disgrace. The broader themes are a national scandal. Jim Crow Jr. travels well—unencumbered by historical baggage.

"Jena is America," says Alan Bean, executive director of Friends of Justice, who has been working with the Jena Six. "The new Jim Crow is the criminal justice system and its impact on poor people in general and people of color in particular. We don't always get the exotic trimmings like the nooses." ■

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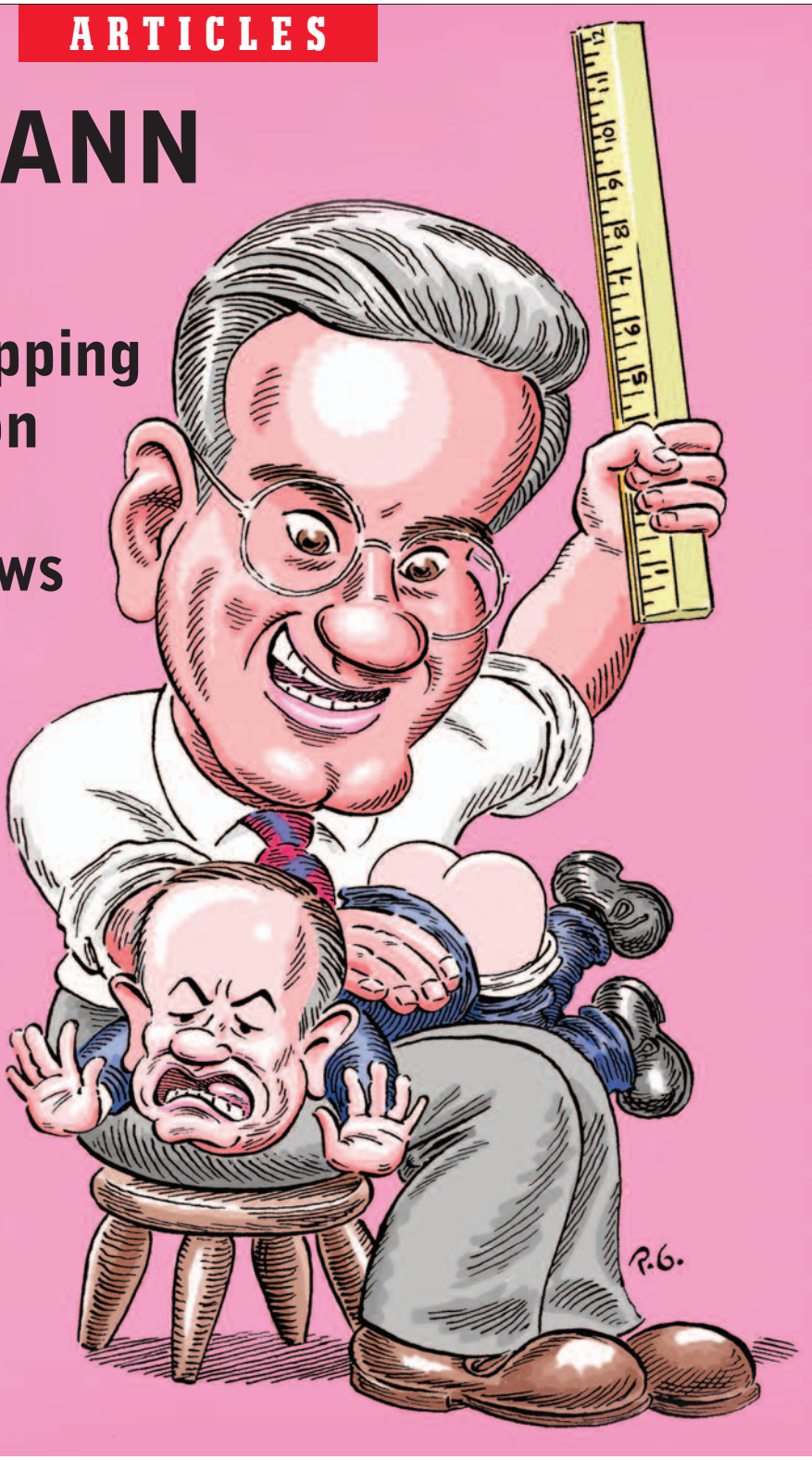
ARTICLES

OLBERMANN RULES!

Why He's Whupping the Competition and Changing the Face of News



MARVIN KITMAN

The launch of Katie Couric a year ago as the anchor of the *CBS Evening News* was hailed by CBS as the biggest thing in news since, well, the invention of denture fixative commercials. It was also the biggest flop. The *CBS Evening News Without Dan Rather or Bob Schieffer* had its lowest ratings since Nielsen began tracking evening news shows in 1987. This turn of events stunned CBS executives—who had given her the famous "Kiss Me Kate" contract, which paid Couric $15 million a year—and the news consultants who thought she was the answer to CBS being mired in third place in the network news race for the past ten years. The news doctors who have been paid millions trying to fix the show for the past year have only made it worse. It didn't matter how many times the consultants got it wrong. Remember what they did to poor Dan Rather? Smile, don't smile. Wear a sweater, don't wear a sweater. Stand up to deliver the news, sit down. It is a law of the news consultancy/network relationship: If we are paying so much money, it must be right. Otherwise, why are we paying so much money?

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Katrina vanden Heuvel,
Editor & Publisher of *The Nation*

THE ANTIDOTE TO MURDOCHIZATION

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Owner of practically everything else

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So, as a TV critic who has logged millions of hours of viewing to help save one of my three favorite commercial networks, I decided to volunteer my services to the Save CBS Campaign. Here's what I would do: First, I would dump the Walter Cronkite school of reporting, of which Katie Couric is the latest practitioner. The objective that's-the-way-it-is style they use at all the network evening news shows is so old, so over. No wonder all the network news programs are falling in the ratings. Katie Couric is just the hardest hit.

What the evening news shows need is less "objectivity" and more analysis. The problem with objective journalism is that it doesn't exist and never did. Molly Ivins disposed of the objectivity question for all time when she observed in 1993, "The fact is that I am a 49-year-old white female, a college-educated Texan. All of that affects the way I see the world. There's no way in hell that I'm going to see anything the same way that a 15-year-old black high school dropout does. We all see the world from where we stand. Anybody who's ever interviewed five eyewitnesses to an automobile accident knows there's no such thing as objectivity."

Olbermann's Special Comments earn a place for him on the Mount Olympus of commercial TV anchors.

What I'm proposing is nothing new. Before Walter Cronkite became the model "objective" newsman, there was Edward R. Murrow. In the late 1930s Murrow started the tradition of reporting the news and analyzing it, giving his opinion of what it all meant. The Murrow legend was built on his opinionated analyses on the *CBS Evening News*.

For those who never saw Murrow's news show, here's how it would go: After running through the headlines, he would call on reporters at home and abroad to give reports on the scene. These so-called Murrow's Boys were real TV journalists, not actors who played them on TV. *CBS News* in the Murrow years had people we respected because of their expertise, not because they were famous TV names. The foreign correspondents weren't empty trench coats but real experts like William Shirer, who reported from Berlin on the menace of Hitler in the 1930s. It didn't matter that Murrow's Boys were bald like David Schoenbrun, who reported from Paris in the glory days, or older than the 18–49 demographic like Dan Schorr. They were specialists in specific areas.

Then Murrow would do his closing essay, in which he would comment on some hot issue, continually treading dangerous waters: McCarthyism at home, apartheid abroad, J. Edgar Hoover, the atomic bomb, stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction—all of which he opposed. He was pro-union and anti-business. He was a dissident on US foreign policy post–World War II. He spoke out against the Truman Doctrine, which had America supporting fascist dictatorships in Greece and elsewhere because they were anti-Communist. He was against funding Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist army, which John Foster Dulles told us would retake the mainland someday, if they didn't die of old age first. He was hard on Douglas MacArthur when he took his troops across the 38th Parallel in the Korean War. He criticized the Pentagon snafus that were getting our troops killed. He was critical of US support for the French in Indochina (pre-Vietnam) and of the Eisenhower Administration's embrace of the French puppet government in Saigon led by a Riviera playboy, Bao Dai. He was against Red Channels and blacklisting and the House Un-American Activities Committee, which identified a Communist under every bed. He even attacked television itself, warning that it had the capacity to "distract, delude, amuse and insulate us."

"No one can eliminate prejudices—just recognize them," Murrow said. His approach was so successful that all the other network news hours copied him.

Finally, CBS president William Paley made Ed Murrow shut up—by canceling his shows. In the dark ages after Murrow, the most powerful commentary on network news was the raised eyebrow of David Brinkley after reading a piece of news on NBC. A generation of telegenic and totally uninvolved journalists followed.

In short, what CBS (and all the others) need is a new Ed Murrow. Good news! There's already one out there on the launchpad who has demonstrated his qualifications. I'm talking about Keith Olbermann of MSNBC. He has the journalistic chops and the mind, heart, instincts and courage.

Olbermann, who anchors a one-hour nightly news show on MSNBC called *Countdown With Keith Olbermann*, closes his show every night by saying "1,547th [for instance] day since Mission Accomplished in Iraq," an *hommage* to Ted Koppel's "Iran Hostage" coverage, which evolved into Koppel's late-night ABC news show *Nightline* (the MSNBC show was originally *Countdown: Iraq*). Then Olbermann throws his crumpled script at the camera, which shatters, a simulated digital effect (something Koppel never did).

"Our charge for the immediate future is to stay out of the way of the news," he explained when the show debuted on March 31, 2003. "News is news. We will not be screwing around with it," a reference to Bill O'Reilly, his rival over at Fox News in the 8 PM time slot. "It will not be a show in which opinion and facts are juxtaposed so as to appear to be the same."

Olbermann, who looks more like a high school teacher than a glitzy TV anchor, is the one who cuts and dices the news of the day into five segments, what he and his staff consider the day's top stories, illustrated with news reports from NBC News correspondents, interviews with newsmakers, whom he treats courteously, interspersed with signature witty interjections (calling 9/11 Rudolph "Giuliani's red badge of courage"), further interrupted by new ways to look at the news.

Olbermann does news quizzes and a puppet theater. Beginning with the Michael Jackson trial, he created comedic puppet "re-enactments" of news stories, using printed photographs glued to popsicle sticks, hand-held in front of a blue screen. Olbermann did the voiceovers himself. My favorites were the "Karl Rove Puppet Theatre" and the "Anna Nicole Smith Supreme Court Puppet Theatre," although the Mel Gibson and Paris Hilton puppets were not too shabby.

Marvin Kitman is the author of The Man Who Would Not Shut Up: The Rise of Bill O'Reilly. *He is currently the media critic of the Huffington Post, and was media critic at* Newsday *for thirty-five years.*

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A segment called "Oddball" regularly assays the day's collection of weird videos, goofy stories with goofy clips of people behaving like idiots, announced with the clarion "Let's play Oddball!"

Each night he picks the Worst Person in the World, awarding a bronze medal (worse), a silver (worser) and a gold (worst). Bill O'Reilly has the distinction of winning all three top spots on a single broadcast (the night of November 30, 2005); as of June he had gone gold fifty-seven times.

What I like about Olbermann as a newscaster is that he makes the evening news look like life itself, very absurd but serious, very angry, very stupid, very silly, very snarky, very much about pop culture. He gives the news in a language that can be understood by news audiences today. It is refreshing to hear a straight newsman making cultural references. If the voting goes heavily Democratic, he told the co-anchor of MSNBC's election night 2006 coverage, Chris Matthews, "you might see some sort of shift toward getting out of that war faster than Britney Spears just got out of her marriage." His was the only show where I could stand to hear about Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes, Brangelina, Britney and estranged husband Kevin Federline, *American Idol* results or other stories he always told us his producers were forcing him to cover.

This is Olbermann's second stint at MSNBC. In 1997–98 he hosted a talk show called *The Big Show*, but he left the network after clashes with management over an edict from the suits to focus on the unfolding Monica Lewinsky scandal, which especially sickened him.

This time around, MSNBC execs gave him the freedom to do the news his way, since they had nothing to lose. Nineteen other shows had already failed opposite *The O'Reilly Factor* since 1996. *Countdown* is now the highest-rated show on MSNBC, which doesn't say much, as MSNBC is ratings-challenged. Still, his ratings in July were up 88 percent over last year.

What I like most about K.O., as he is called offscreen, is his passion. He goes after the dragon—which, as Murrow's producer, Fred Friendly, used to say, is the real function of news.

Olbermann's Special Comments, as they are labeled, make up the core of my pitch as his volunteer advocate. They were off the radar scopes until September 2006, when Rumsfeld said anyone who was critical of the "war on terror" or the war in Iraq or of Administration policies was the equivalent of the people who appeased Hitler in the 1930s. "I'm not a big fan of being called a Nazi appeaser or even a parallel Nazi," K.O. said. "I took that personally." And he began eviscerating Rumsfeld.

He has done twenty-two of the "specials" (as of July 19), all of which earn a place for him on the Mount Olympus of commercial TV anchors. The July 4 special on his reaction to Scooter Libby's pardon, explaining the historical imperatives for Bush and Cheney to resign, was the Gettysburg Address of K.O.'s commentaries:

> I accuse you, Mr. Bush, of lying this country into war. I accuse you of fabricating in the minds of your own people a false implied link between Saddam Hussein and 9/11. I accuse you of firing the generals who told you that the plans for Iraq were disastrously insufficient.... I accuse you of subverting the Constitution, not in some misguided but sincerely motivated struggle to combat terrorists, but to stifle dissent. I accuse you of fomenting fear among your own people, of creating the very terror you claim to have fought. I accuse you of exploiting that unreasoning fear, the natural fear of your own people who just want to live their lives in peace, as a political tool to slander your critics and libel your opponents. I accuse you of handing part of this Republic over to a Vice President who is without conscience and letting him run roughshod over it....

For ten minutes, Olbermann spoke with fierce clarity and surgical precision, drawing a comparison to President Nixon's resignation. He had obviously done his homework. His recitation of Bush's crimes concluded with his observation that the President had been "an accessory to the obstruction of justice" in the Libby case. "From Iraq to Scooter Libby," Olbermann said at the time, "Bush and Cheney have lost Americans' trust and stabbed this nation in the back. It's time for them to go." The highest praise I can give is to say I can imagine Ed Murrow speaking those words.

I'm not saying Olbermann is Ed Murrow. He is, however, what Ed Murrow might sound like today, changing with the times as a good newsman should.

I also realize the format of *Countdown*, with its mix of serious and lite news, might seem a little schizophrenic to older folks who haven't kept up with the crazy way the culture is evolving. But it's what has to be done to get the literally tens of people who watch MSNBC to pay attention.

My final recommendation is that what would make *The O Factor*—or whatever they would call the Olbermann-anchored evening news—work is for *CBS News* to bite the bullet and be the first to go to an hourlong format, something the network began debating in Walter Cronkite's day. The network under Bill Paley wrestled with its conscience and always lost, preferring a half-hour of lucrative syndicated trash following the news.

Would it work? There would be gnashing of teeth, rending of garments at Black Rock. There would be outrage from the on-the-air zombies now doing the news from the Land of the Living Dead. If the new concept caught on, they too would need to find something to say about the news they are mindlessly reporting. It would change the face of network TV news.

TV is an art form that suffers from kleptomania. They would rather steal something that works than try anything original. So much attention will be paid to *The O Factor* that the other networks will be looking for their own Olbermanns, newsmen with differing values and opinions. After all, in Ed Murrow's day, right-wingers Fulton Lewis Jr. and Walter Winchell were also on the air.

A whole new audience will emerge for the network evening news when it stops being, as Arianna Huffington put it, "the referee, pretending there are two sides to every issue." As Murrow suggested, there actually could be three, or even one.

Naturally, CBS won't buy the Kitman Plan, because I'm giving it to them free of charge. In TV news, they don't believe anything is good unless they spend millions to ruin the likes of Couric and Rather. And that's the way it is. ■

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About Your Professor

Professor J. Rufus Fears is David Ross Boyd Professor of Classics at the University of Oklahoma. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University and has written four books and more than 100 articles and reviews. Professor Fears has been recognized for outstanding teaching on 24 occasions. In 2006, the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence awarded him its medal for Excellence in College and University Teaching.

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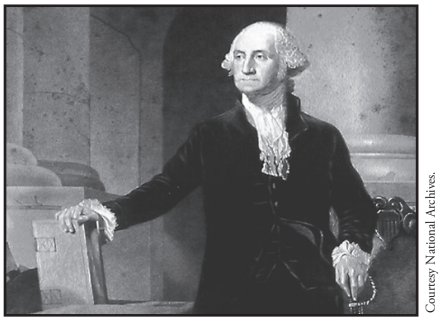

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George Washington led the fledgling United States through a time of crisis.

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REPUBLICANS CAN BLOCK EFFORTS TO END THE WAR—BUT THEY'LL PAY A PRICE AT THE POLLS.

The GOP's Iraq Problem

ROBERT DREYFUSS

All spring and summer, the Republicans ducked the question of what to do about Iraq. Their mantra was: Wait for General Petraeus. Among Washington insiders, it was no secret why: The hugely unpopular war was largely responsible for the party's massive defeat in November 2006, and as party officials scanned confidential internal polls, things weren't looking any better for 2008. Rather than answer questions about the need to change course in Iraq, the GOP hoped and prayed that the general—dubbed by some "Petraeus ex machina"—would fly in from Baghdad with good news to report, so Republicans could relax.

RYAN INZANA

He didn't, and they can't.

Though the new Republican mantra is that the surge is working and that Petraeus needs more time, there is little evidence the American public was swayed by the general's report that the war in Iraq is turning around. Four and a half years into the grinding conflict, public opinion has decisively shifted against the war, and it isn't going back, according to GOP pollsters and consultants. "The American people have turned the page on Iraq," says Kellyanne Conway of The Polling Company, a GOP firm.

George W. Bush's damn-the-torpedoes determination to stay the course in Iraq has thus created an excruciating dilemma for the GOP. By sticking with the White House, Republicans in Congress can block the Democrats' efforts to end the war, either by filibuster or by upholding an almost certain veto of any bill challenging the war. But any such victory will be Pyrrhic, costing them dearly in next year's election. Between now and then, they'll remain trapped between a White House that isn't ready to give an inch and a Democratic caucus in the House and Senate that can force them to cast vote after embarrassing vote in defense of Bush's war over the next thirteen months, in full public view.

Although Democrats have the stronger hand, Iraq poses a significant challenge for them, too. Having largely adopted an antiwar stand, the Democrats can look forward to 2008 secure in the knowledge that public opinion is overwhelmingly on their side. Still, since they don't have the votes to force a shift in the war, they may find themselves caught between their disappointed, left-leaning antiwar base and a GOP attack machine describing them as "Defeatocrats." Even with public support, it will require some real political skill for the Democrats to highlight the White House's sorry record in Iraq—from the rigged intelligence that justified the war to the mismanagement of the occupation to its enormous cost in lives and treasure—while insuring that the Republicans pay the price.

On the Hill, Republicans are mightily aware that pollsters, pundits and politicians predict sweeping Democratic gains in 2008 if Iraq is still an issue. With twenty-two GOP-held Senate seats up for grabs next year—many from states that are hotbeds of antiwar sentiment such as Oregon, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Maine and New Mexico—the Democrats have an outside shot at winning a filibuster-proof, sixty-vote majority in the Senate. In the House, Democrats could pick up as many as thirty additional seats. Plus, of course, the White House.

According to Anna Greenberg, a Democratic pollster with Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, the GOP is weak everywhere, and Iraq is the main driver. An August 2007 survey of the seventy most competitive Congressional districts Greenberg's firm carried out for the Democracy Corps showed that even in Republican-held districts, 61 percent of voters "want their member of Congress to vote to change President Bush's direction on Iraq and start requiring a reduction of troops." Perhaps the most stunning result of her polling: In the thirty-five most competitive districts now held by a Republican member of Congress, voters favor the Democratic candidate by 49 to 44 percent. "The war hurts Republicans among swing voters, among seniors and older voters, especially older women, in urban/suburban districts, and in rural areas," says Greenberg. Just in urban/suburban districts, where antiwar sentiment is strong, Democrats could pick up eight or nine seats, she says. In Republican-held urban/suburban districts—typified by those held by Representatives Christopher Shays of suburban Connecticut and Mark Kirk of Chicago—fully two-thirds of voters support legislation that would set a deadline or timetable for withdrawal.

Even in rural areas, where the Republican base is traditionally rock solid, the war in Iraq has soured GOP voters on the party. "Given the current national climate, Republicans must win rural areas to see success in 2008, while Democrats in turn have an historic opportunity to strike deep into the Republican base," says a June report by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner. And it won't matter how the White House tries to spin the news from Iraq if the news continues to be bad. "Spin is so secondary to substance," says GOP pollster William Greener. "Reality dominates what people are going to think or not think. It won't make any difference what the spin is, if the substance is bad."

Desperate for help from the White House, GOP Congressional delegations visited Bush to express their concern. A group of eleven endangered moderate GOP House members, including Shays, trekked down Pennsylvania Avenue in early May to see if

Robert Dreyfuss, a Nation *contributing editor, is the author of* Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam *(Metropolitan).*

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Bush would budge. So did a more select group of senior senators. All were rebuffed. "When the party bulls went to the White House, they said, 'We know for a fact that in eighteen months your policy will be reversed. Are you telling us that for the sake of the next eighteen months, you're willing to destroy the party?'" says Steve Simon, a former national security aide to Bill Clinton. "And the President's answer was, 'Thanks for your interest.'"

"It's clear by now that President Bush is going to let his allies on the Hill twist in the wind," says Stephen Biddle of the Council on Foreign Relations, who has informally advised General Petraeus. "The Administration's vote-counting tells them that they're not going to lose enough Republicans to allow Congress to override a veto."

Inside the White House, the worry about 2008 seems not to have penetrated Bush's inner circle. The political people— from former White House politics czar Karl Rove, who quit in August, on down—don't have much input into the President's national security decisions. "I've talked to guys who are high-ranking inside the White House, but they're constantly being told, This isn't your department," says Grover Norquist, the right-wing activist who keeps close tabs on Republican politics. "Part of the problem is, they're not allowed to have an opinion on this. Only the experts are allowed to have opinions."

Doug Bandow, a libertarian-conservative foreign policy expert and former aide to President Reagan, says that neither Bush nor Cheney will be moved by politics when it comes to Iraq. "We see a stubbornness in the President that is virtually unique. What does he care about the party's future? He parachuted into politics on his father's coattails. He's never been much of a party guy, and I think he could care less," says Bandow. "Cheney is more of a Republican, and he might be expected to be more concerned about politics and the party's future. But he's at the end of his career, and he just might be ready to bring the whole house down on top of them if that's what it takes." Adds Larry Wilkerson, who was a top aide to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, "Cheney's always been an ultra-nationalist cowboy from Wyoming, and he's the kind of guy who would indeed sacrifice the party for what he sees as America's best interests."

Signs of the Republican Party's distress over Iraq began to emerge even before the 2006 election. Early that year a phalanx of moderate and mainstream Republicans, led by Representative Frank Wolf and quietly backed by Senator John Warner, then chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, put together the Iraq Study Group, led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Representative Lee Hamilton. The task force assembled a bipartisan plan to begin winding down the war, and many in the GOP hoped that Bush would embrace it. But Bush, backed by Cheney and a team of ideologues from the American Enterprise Institute, announced the surge, escalating the war instead.

Checkmated, some Republicans on Capitol Hill gradually began to express their doubts publicly. One by one, with one eye on the war and the other on the 2008 elections, prominent Republican senators began to break with the President—first Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, then Gordon Smith of Oregon and Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe of Maine, and finally George Voinovich of Ohio, Pete Domenici of New Mexico and Dick Lugar of Indiana. Vulnerable senators up for re-election in '08, such as Norm

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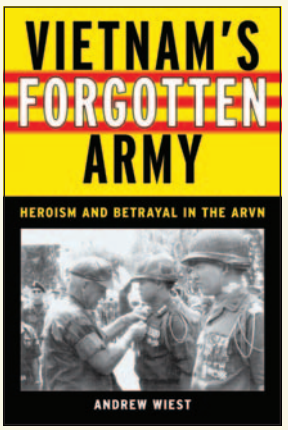

Foreword by
Senator Jim Webb

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Coleman of Minnesota and John Sununu of New Hampshire, began to express concern. And a handful of key GOP senators signed on to a bipartisan bill to enact into law the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, including Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, Robert Bennett of Utah and, surprisingly, minority leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

Feeling heat from his constituents, and under pressure from an organized antiwar effort led by Americans Against Escalation in Iraq, McConnell began singing loudly in the waiting-for-Petraeus chorus, suggesting—wrongly, it turns out—that perhaps the Bush Administration would change course come September. "I anticipate that we will probably be going in a different direction in some way in Iraq, and it will be interesting to see what the Administration chooses to do," said McConnell in June.

'There is this feeling that to abandon the White House is…like joining up with the enemy.' —GOP pollster Kellyanne Conway

Another Republican senator who sounded off was North Carolina's Elizabeth Dole, also up for re-election in 2008. With little fanfare, she issued a statement raising concern over the Administration's July interim report on the surge, in which the White House admitted that almost none of the benchmarks had been met thus far. "Our commitment in Iraq is not indefinite, nor should the Iraqi government perceive it to be," said Dole. "It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008." During General Petraeus's appearance before the Armed Services Committee in September, Dole pointedly declared that she would now support "what some have called action-forcing measures."

But during the spring and summer, when forced to vote, only a tiny handful of Republicans turned their unhappiness with the Administration's Iraq policy into votes to end the war. Just four GOP senators—Hagel, Smith, Snowe and Collins—voted in favor of a bill to set a timetable for withdrawal, along with only four GOP House members. With Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker having testified, the Democrats intend to call the Republicans' bluff. "All these people saying September is the time, they're going to have to belly up to the bar and decide how to vote," said majority leader Harry Reid of Nevada.

On both sides of the aisle there is pessimism that enough Republicans will break with the White House to make a difference. The mainstream Democratic legislative vehicles for ending the war are those proposed by Carl Levin and Jack Reed in the Senate and David Obey and Jim McGovern in the House. These measures call for the withdrawal of US forces to begin within 120 days of passage, to be completed by April 30, 2008, with a residual American force to combat Al Qaeda, train Iraqi forces and protect US personnel. "I don't think there's a chance of getting another eight to ten Republicans on Levin-Reed," says a top Democratic staffer on Capitol Hill. (Last time around, in mid-July, with four Republican votes, the Democrats mustered a total of fifty-two votes for the bill. They need sixty to overcome a filibuster and sixty-seven to override a veto.)

Conservative Republicans unhappy with Bush's Iraq policy, from libertarians to mainstream fiscal conservatives to right-wing activists like Norquist, aren't optimistic that House and Senate Republicans will break with Bush's war policy. "In the meetings I've attended, they're circling the wagons," says Mike Ostrolenk, founder of a new conservative defense think tank, the American Conservative Defense Alliance, established in part to create an alternative to the neoconservatives on foreign policy. "They get very defensive on the question of supporting the President's policy, and they discount as oddballs the Republicans who've broken with that policy."

Republican pollster Kellyanne Conway puts it this way: "There is this feeling that to abandon the White House is to shack up with the Democrats, that there is no 'third way.' And so leaving Bush is like joining up with the enemy."

In the wake of Petraeus's testimony, Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi have declared their willingness to water down the Democratic antiwar bills, or perhaps to support more modest legislation, in order to attract additional Republican support. But it's a risky strategy, since by doing so they're certain to infuriate hard-core antiwar Democrats on the Hill, with no guarantee that whatever emerges as a result can survive an almost certain presidential veto. In addition, the atmosphere on the Hill is so poisonous that compromise is exceedingly difficult. "The degree of partisanship is so high, the trust so low, that it's really hard for either side to move toward each other," says a staffer for a leading Democratic senator.

Meanwhile, the White House is doing everything it can to prevent even a modest compromise on the Hill. "The White House posture of complete resolve and grim determination is aimed at undermining deals on the Hill," says former aide Steve Simon. "Because there won't be any payoff. You're not going to get anything for it." A top staffer on the Democratic side agrees. In the end, he says, "a veto is a veto is a veto."

Lacking the courage and the political muscle to confront the White House directly, most Republicans are glumly resigned to fighting another election in which Iraq is the central concern. "In polls I've seen, including internal Republican polls, it is abundantly clear that Iraq is the issue," says Conway.

Many Republicans, desperate to proclaim a light at the end of the tunnel, will point to the end of the surge as a harbinger of further withdrawals to come. But, pollsters say, while the end of the surge may briefly boost Republican hopes and trigger a temporary uptick in the polls, it isn't likely to last long when measured against the toll of continuing US casualties, hundreds of billions of dollars spent on the occupation, and Iraq's chaotic ethnic and sectarian civil war. "If in the end, the [impact] of the Petraeus-Crocker report is, We're here indefinitely and we don't know how long it's going to take, that's very bad news for Republicans," says Tony Fabrizio, a leading GOP pollster.

Meanwhile, GOP worry continues to grow. "I'll tell you where senators and House members are seeing the impact of Iraq: in fundraising," says Conway. "The committees, including the NRCC [National Republican Campaign Committee], the NRSC [National Republican Senatorial Committee] and the

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RNC [Republican National Committee], are having a devil of a time raising funds." At last report, the Democrats had $20.4 million in cash for Senate races and Republicans just $5.8 million. Similar disparities prevail for House fundraising and among presidential candidates.

If, as expected, Congressional Republicans stay tethered to the White House, a real change could occur if and when one of the top-tier GOP presidential candidates makes a definitive break with Bush on Iraq, GOP pollsters say. "The 'Sister Souljah moment' for Republican presidential candidates will be on Iraq," predicts Conway. According to Fabrizio, at least one or two of the leading GOP contenders may read the post–Petraeus/Crocker tea leaves and break with the White House. "Don't discount the presidential side of the equation," says Fabrizio, who says he has heard that former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney could be the first to go. "I wouldn't underestimate the impact on Capitol Hill if one of the major candidates breaks," he says. So far, however, all of the major Republican candidates remain vociferous supporters of the President's Iraq policy.

Meanwhile, the Democrats intend to keep the pressure on, even if they can't force Bush to bring the troops home. Beginning in mid-September and continuing into October, the House and Senate will have to deal with defense appropriation and defense authorization bills, along with a White House request for as much as $200 billion to fund the war and the continuing surge. If the Democrats are unable to use those bills to impose a timetable, their fallback strategy may be to vote only enough money for forty-five or sixty days. That would compel Republicans in Congress to defend Bush's war over and over again into 2008. Among other measures, Senator Jim Webb is backing a bill to impose longer home-leave and readiness requirements, making it harder to find US forces to send to Iraq. In July Webb's plan won fifty-six votes, seven of them Republican, and might get enough this time to overcome a GOP filibuster—only to face a presidential veto. "We'll try to keep 'em on a very short leash," says a top Democratic staffer in the House.

"It's clear that the President's strategy is to keep the war going until he leaves office and then blame the Democrats for losing the war," says a House staffer with close ties to the antiwar caucus. "We've got to frame the debate. Politically, we can't stop Bush as long as he's in the White House. But he has to be held accountable. We're not going to do anything that gives the Republicans any cover, and we'll do what we can to clarify the differences. The next step is a unified, strategic position on our part to make sure that the President gets the blame for the fiasco in Iraq." ■

I HAD SPENT THE WAR YEARS IN AN IDYLL. SHE HAD LIVED THROUGH UNIMAGINABLE HORROR.

Had She Lived

BYRON DOBELL

In 1946 a photograph in *Vogue* showed a young man in a dinner jacket flirting with a beautiful model near the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. The time was only two years after the liberation of the city, and I was a senior at Columbia who, like everyone I knew, dreamed of traveling to France. Pictures like this one represented the image of what life might hold in store for me if only I could reach the City of Light—a goal I achieved three years later thanks to the GI Bill. No, I was not—by a long shot—the elegant young man in the photograph, and my girlfriend was not a model. But our affair had its moments of glamour, even though they were shadowed by some of the worst events of modern history.

RYAN INZANA

Ruth Baeck was her name. When I met her on the Left Bank in 1949, I asked her about the number tattooed on her arm and she told me her story. She said she was a niece of Leo Baeck, the revered Chief Rabbi of Berlin in the 1930s and '40s, who, with Ruth and her mother and more than 100,000 other Jews, had been held in the Theresienstadt concentration camp outside Prague. At some point Ruth was called on by Baeck in an attempt to save the life of a young Czech actor who was sick with typhus and could no longer answer the roll call. The desperate plan was for her to marry the young man so that his ultimate fate might be forestalled—as if the Nazis could conceivably be sentimental about newlyweds. Baeck performed the ceremony in the barracks, but the next day the guards shot the boy as he lay in his bunk.

Ruth was 16. She survived as best she could—this was, after all, the showcase camp of the Nazis, and activities like music, art and acting were encouraged for the eyes of the visiting Red Cross. But there was a constant stream of Jews sent from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz.

Meanwhile, Ruth's mother was dying of cancer and in great pain; there was no morphine. Not long after she died, the camp was liberated and Ruth made her way to Paris. Her father had been able to weather the war years safely in Morocco, where he had gone on a business trip. Ruth had herself photographed in the traditional formal way and sent the portrait to him so he could see what his daughter looked like after a lapse of seven years. They had never gotten along well and, after a brief reunion, never saw each other again.

In Paris Ruth lived at first in a hostel for displaced girls spon-

Byron Dobell, a painter of portraits and landscapes, is the former chief editor of Book World, Esquire *and* American Heritage. *His seventh one-man show will open in December at the First Street Gallery in New York.*

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sored by the Rothschilds. She was a bit older than the others and, after finding work in a bookstore, moved to a studio apartment on the Rue du Boccador. It was about this time that she was introduced to me by her former boyfriend, Richard, a Polish Jew who had survived in Vichy France during the war and was now, like me, a student at the Sorbonne.

Unlike Richard, a true scholar who eventually became a distinguished professor, I was what the French would call a *flâneur*—more interested in sitting in cafes and strolling the boulevards, observing the passersby, eyeing the rare creatures who lived in the fashionable *arrondissements*, reading Jane Austen and Hemingway and even Molière. I was a prime exemplar of Brecht's remark that an optimist is someone who hasn't heard the news. For me it was all "April in Paris, chestnuts in blossom" and every romantic cliché I had imbibed from the French movies I had seen in New York.

For a brief time Ruth and I began the kind of young love affair set in Paris that is familiar to everyone. We often had lunch at a tiny Russian restaurant, where we appreciated the food and the friendly proprietor. We danced at the Tabou, a smoky, torrid cafe where young existentialists, dressed in black turtlenecks, gathered and where I was startled to see the patrons deodorizing themselves by splashing their underarms with an obligatory glass of cognac. After a night together we went to the Louvre on a Sunday morning—it was not crowded in those days—and lost ourselves admiring the *Winged Victory*.

In his novel The Ghost Writer, *Philip Roth imagined an Anne Frank who survived. We had the uncanny feeling we had actually seen her.*

It was a great season in Paris for theater and films. I went with Ruth to one of the first showings of *Citizen Kane* in France. Surrounded by French students who obviously adored Welles's masterpiece, I felt a burst of patriotic pride—Americans were capable of superb artistic achievement despite all the voices that claimed the primacy of European culture. We saw Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud in a French version of *Hamlet*—the staging was hopeless, but Barrault and Renaud were splendid. We saw a dramatization of Colette's *Chéri* starring Jean Marais. Ruth especially loved a production of Jules Romains's *Knock* with the incomparable Louis Jouvet.

But something was disturbing her. As we huddled together in bed one winter evening, a barrage of thunder and lightning roared out of a snowy sky. She was frightened almost to the point of hysteria. Nevertheless, on her birthday Ruth dressed in a long gown and dragged me to a luxurious nightclub called Le Grand Seigneur. It was early and we were the only customers. I was wearing a lumpy tweed suit and felt extremely uncomfortable. She was the picture of highborn self-possession. The musicians played the theme from *The Third Man*, a tune that swept Paris after the movie opened.

I was now aware of how fragile Ruth was, and I could do nothing about it. She had lived through unimaginable horror, whereas I was a strapping American boy who had spent most of the war years in an idyllic high school surrounded by loving friends and teachers. I was abashed by my good fortune; I had never been hunted down, imprisoned, not sure whether I would live or die.

Ruth suddenly gave up her job at the bookstore and took to sleeping all day, exchanging poems clandestinely with her friends in Prague, who by then had come under the heel of the Stalinists. After recovering from an attack of appendicitis (which set off a hallucination that she was being protected by the King of Romania), a mood of mourning and melancholy came over her. Then she turned wild, once breaking away into onrushing traffic in the Place de la Concorde, chased by Richard and me. Within a day or two, with the help of the police, she was admitted to the gloomy wards of the Maison Blanche—a kind of Bellevue.

Ruth was released a few weeks later, by which time I had decided to return to the States. I was still a student, I had no money, I was afraid of Ruth and her misery and, looking for an excuse, I felt I was needed back in New York by my American girl. Ruth's one real friend, George, had been in the Czech wing of the Royal Air Force during the war. They had lived near each other in Prague but hadn't met until Paris. George was smitten with her. Because he had some money and was older than Richard and me, he decided to take responsibility for her—although Ruth was not happy that he was a liquor salesman rather than an artist, poet or intellectual.

I returned to the States, Richard to the Sorbonne. A few months later George sent a postcard from Montreux, telling me that he and Ruth were having a good time on vacation, that she was better and often asked about me. Rueful and guilt-ridden, I never replied.

Over the course of the next twenty years I saw Ruth in New York twice. She had married George, moved to Toronto and had two children. The first time I saw her again, I had warned my wife that Ruth might be a bit strange or upsetting, but the visit was a success. Ruth was quite composed, very much the vivacious bourgeois lady. The second time, a few years later, I met her at the Plaza for a tense drink. She seemed lost and confused.

In 1977 my wife and I visited Richard and his wife in their Montmartre apartment. He told me that Ruth had committed suicide in 1972. I was shocked but not surprised—Richard said that even in Prague before the war Ruth was somewhat unstable. Then Richard and I looked at a copy of the photograph commissioned for her father shortly after her release from Theresienstadt. It was a strange moment. The picture showed a dark-haired, dark-eyed girl almost exactly the age Anne Frank would have been had she lived. (The Anne Frank story had not, of course, been available in English or French until after Ruth's Paris breakdown.) I realized that while Philip Roth in his novel *The Ghost Writer* had only imagined an Anne Frank who survived, we had the uncanny feeling that we had actually seen her with our own eyes, spoken to her, felt her presence, read her poems.

Every September my wife and I visit Paris and stay at a hotel across the street from La Belle Ferronnière, a cafe where Ruth, Richard and I sometimes stopped for an especially good cognac. Like so much of the city, the cafe hasn't changed at all in the past half century. ■

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FOR WORKERS, NAIL SALONS ARE A TOXIC MIX OF LOW PAY AND UNREGULATED PRODUCTS.

The High Price of Beauty

VIRGINIA SOLE-SMITH

Tomi Tran works as a nail technician in Raleigh, North Carolina. She pays around $100 per week to rent a booth in a hair salon, buys all her polishes and supplies and finds her own clients, often giving free manicures at local malls and distributing fliers to drum up business. It's hard work, but Tran, 22, says it's heaven compared with her last salon job.

RYAN INZANA

"It was basically a sweatshop," she explains. "I would feel lightheaded and get terrible headaches from the smell of the chemicals, and I was working around sixty-four hours a week, usually with no lunch breaks." The final straw came when Tran became sick with a stomach virus but her boss told her she would lose her job if she didn't come to work. "She told me I had to work, but I could rest in the back in between customers," she says. Tran decided to quit and risk going into business for herself so she could choose her own hours and avoid the acrylic nail products that made her so sick.

Tara Horton, 37, of Sanger, California, wishes she had dropped out of beauty school. "Out of the eleven of us training to do nails, one woman had a baby that was stillborn at eight months, and another was born all messed up with his bowels and intestinal tract on the outside of his body," she says. "I remember thinking that's a pretty high failure rate." Horton began working in salons and later lost two babies herself and was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. "You just don't go from being a nonsmoking, healthy, active person to dying of cancer without asking why," she says. "Now, I realize, we were standing over those chemicals all day long."

Stories like Tran's and Horton's have become rampant as the nail salon industry has exploded in the past ten years, with the number of nail technicians in America jumping 374 percent to more than 380,000 nationwide, with women making up 96 percent of the industry workforce. But "no one is really looking at these folks," says Alexandra Gorman, director of science and research for Women's Voices for the Earth, an environmental justice organization in Missoula, Montana, who co-wrote its March report called *Glossed Over: Health Hazards With Toxic Exposure in Nail Salons*. "There's a major lack of studies, so these women are going to work and having symptoms, but the authorities are telling them they're fine."

In fact, the cosmetology industry uses more than 10,000 chemicals in its products, 89 percent of which have not been evaluated for safety, according to the nonprofit Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, which corrals available evidence in its Skin Deep database (cosmeticsdatabase.com). The polishes, acrylics and other products used in nail salons contain some twenty chemicals flagged as having "potential symptoms and health effects" by the Environmental Protection Agency. The list includes solvents like acetone, which may cause central nervous system depression, and ethyl methacrylate, linked to eye, skin and respiratory tract irritation. It also highlights chemicals banned by the European Union and since removed by international brands like OPI, Sally Hansen and Revlon. Those include formalin, which may cause asthma-like respiratory problems and cancer in high or prolonged doses, and toluene, a solvent with the potential to cause dizziness, headaches and liver and kidney damage. Perhaps most contentious of all is dibutyl phthalate, a plasticizer that makes nail polish more flexible. It has been linked to eye and upper respiratory system irritation and may be toxic to the reproductive system.

"Most kinds of house paint are less toxic than what you find in nail polish," says Cora Roelofs, ScD, an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, whose research has documented acute health problems like skin irritations and asthma among nail salon workers in the Boston area. "Yet we still know very little about more serious health effects, nor do we understand how these chemicals interact with each other in the salon environment."

It's the lack of knowledge about nail polish's potential reproductive toxicity that's most chilling for advocates and salon workers. "We're seeing a substantial number of folks from the beauty industry who are concerned about whether they can work during their pregnancies," says John Meyer, MD, an assistant professor in the Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University of Connecticut Health Center. He responds to queries on a risk line run by the Connecticut Department of Health and estimates that the center receives seventy to 140 calls a year from concerned workers or their physicians. An analysis of a California occupational health hot line found that manicurists and cosmetologists were the third-largest occupational sector to call with pregnancy-related inquiries.

"Just because we don't know something is dangerous doesn't mean it's safe," says Mark Cullen, MD, director of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at Yale University School of Medicine. "These are a class of chemicals where the data is incomplete but the concern is real." Studies show that when laboratory workers are exposed to similar solvents without proper ventilation, there is a small but increased risk for miscarriages and birth defects similar to fetal alcohol syndrome, explains Dr. Meyer. Meanwhile, most research on phthalates comes from animal studies, making it difficult to predict human response.

Virginia Sole-Smith is a journalist whose work has appeared in the New York Times, Good Housekeeping, More *and other publications.* *Research assistance provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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But this lack of data allows the industry to dismiss health issues out of hand. "There are no risks to these products if you use them safely," says Doug Schoon, vice president of science and technology for Creative Nail Design, a leading manufacturer of professional nail products. "It's a misconception to say these products haven't been studied. They've been looked at by the leading experts in the world and found to be safe."

By "leading experts in the world," Schoon means the Cosmetic Ingredient Review, which he describes as "famous for being fair and honest." The CIR is a panel of scientists funded by the industry's Cosmetic, Fragrance and Toiletry Association (CFTA) who assess the safety of ingredients used in cosmetics. They're quick to distance themselves from the manufacturers: "The industry gets the privilege of paying to support us, but that's pretty much it," says Alan Andersen, PhD, the board's director and scientific coordinator. "I think it's actually quite an unfair leap to suggest that there is any influence. Our situation closely parallels the situation at the FDA, where companies pay user fees for safety assessments of medical devices. Would you say the industry is controlling the FDA?"

About 40 percent of nail technicians are Vietnamese immigrants who earn as little as $50 for an eight- to ten-hour day.

Well, you might. "The CIR has this weird semi-deputized status with the FDA," explains Mark Schapiro, author of *Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products and What's at Stake for American Power*. "The FDA doesn't have the manpower to do their own safety assessments, so they rely on the CIR for all their data." Indeed, an FDA spokesman who preferred not to be named is quick to give the CIR his blessing: "They're really good about being objective; I've never seen any bias. The system does work, though it might feel a little bit weak to consumers."

"A little bit weak" is putting it mildly. Even if the CIR "doesn't hesitate to tell a company if an ingredient is unsafe," as the FDA spokesman claims, that company is on the honor system to heed its advice—the panel has no authority to restrict the use of a product. It's clear the industry has a seat at the table. After all, it's their table; CFTA and CIR share office space and support staff in Washington. "When I attended the CIR's assessment of dibutyl phthalate, the room was full of PR folks and a CFTA lobbyist dominated the meeting," says Bryony Schwan, a founding member of Campaign for Safe Cosmetics. "He was sitting there doing calculations on the back of a napkin, dismissing any data that conflicted with his point of view."

The numbers tell the rest of the story. While the European Union's Cosmetics Directive has banned some 1,200 chemicals, the FDA has restricted only nine for use in cosmetics. "The EU appears to have more authority," admits the FDA spokesman. "The burden of the FDA is that we must demonstrate an ingredient is harmful as used before we can ban it." The CIR has concluded that it has insufficient data on the safety of an additional 119 chemicals but balks at the idea of regulating them per the precautionary principle. "Ours is a risk assessment approach, and it requires data," says the CIR's Andersen.

When it comes to nail salons, the FDA is quick to point out that any health risks presented by a hazardous working environment are out of its jurisdiction—even if the hazards are posed by cosmetics. This responsibility is shared between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which regulates indoor air quality, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which sets permissible exposure limits for all the chemicals nail salon workers use.

The EPA first took an interest in nail salons when Asian community groups around Houston approached its regional office with concerns. The Region 6 office published *A Guide to Protect the Health of Nail Salon Workers and Their Working Environment* in May 2004, which outraged the industry. "It's a ridiculous piece of garbage," Schoon said of the brochure. "The EPA was very embarrassed and pulled it off their website." Region 6's Nail Salon Project was transferred to the DC office, and in March a revised manual, *Protecting the Health of Nail Salon Workers*, appeared. This time, "we involved all the stakeholders," says Clive Davies, coordinator of the project, including Schoon and the Nail Manufacturers' Council, another industry association.

Their influence is palpable. The 2004 manual stated, "Nail salon products may contain many potentially harmful chemicals that can be a major cause of occupational asthma as well as other health and environmental concerns." The updated version takes a different stance: "Products that nail salon workers use are critical to performing high-quality services, and indeed, without them, these services would not be possible." It later adds a caveat: "If proper care is not taken, overexposure may occur and could result in adverse health effects, such as skin irritation, allergic reaction, or serious eye injury."

Perhaps the biggest drawback of the updated manual is that the EPA evaluates a chemical's health risks based on whether it exceeds OSHA's permissible exposure limits, developed for industrial settings. As Dr. Meyer notes, "These standards are designed to prevent acute problems like neurological intoxication or respiratory difficulty that develop soon after a large dose. They aren't set up to assess cancer and chronic disease which develop from long-term, low-dose exposure." Many of the standards also haven't changed since OSHA first set limits in 1968, when the populations it studied were mostly male. "They don't take into account female reproductive health issues," says Meyer.

The one thing scientists, advocates, industry and government agencies agree on is that more education about "best practices" is crucial to avoiding, or at least minimizing, health problems. But it's a stopgap measure, passing the buck to the technicians—who have the least control over the situation. "Education only goes so far," says Meyer. "It shouldn't be incumbent on the workers to be their own protectors."

Especially because making "best practices" happen in the real world is a complicated process for this workforce, whose average salary is less than $17,000 per year; many rent booths or work on commission, meaning traditional workers' rights laws don't protect them. About 40 percent of nail technicians are Vietnamese immigrants, many of whom don't speak much English and earn as little as $50 for an eight- to ten-hour day.

In California, where 80 percent of the state's 80,000 technicians are Vietnamese, advocates are working on filling the

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research and education gaps through a coalition of nonprofits called the California Healthy Nail Salons Collaborative. They plan to publish the first baseline study of nail salon workers' health. Community advocate Lenh Tsan makes weekly visits to hundreds of salons in the Bay Area, toting a rolling suitcase filled with rubber gloves, face masks and incense to test air circulation, and collecting reports of eye infections, skin rashes, asthma, headaches, nausea and dizziness. She encourages workers and owners to come together to improve conditions, but it's slow going. "There's a lot of fear," Tsan says. "It takes several visits before they get comfortable enough to tell us what's going on."

"My community is suffering silent," says C.M. Nguyen, 47, a Vietnamese immigrant and salon worker Tsan recruited to help. "They have lots of concerns, but they don't like me to speak out." Tsan thinks the problem is partly cultural: "In Asian culture, you're taught to be very respectful of hierarchy," she explains. "It's hard for these women to speak up. So if your boss doesn't care about chemicals and safety, why should you?"

It's also just plain bad for business. Owners and workers alike are concerned about how customers will respond to nail technicians wearing carbon filter masks and gloves, as well as the expense of installing better ventilation systems. And the industry's huge growth makes for cutthroat competition. In Oakland, eleven nail salons crowd into a five-block stretch of Grand Avenue. "I'm trying to get everyone around here to agree to raise their prices by $2, but I don't know if they'll do it," says Jeannie, a 23-year-old nail technician who runs one of the salons with her mother. They both suffer constant allergies and want to switch from generic products to safer, more expensive brands of polish and acrylic. But long work days and relentless worries about making the rent on their salon make it hard to find time or money for changes.

Non-Vietnamese salons feel the pressure too. Horton says that when she quit, her co-workers didn't want to hear it: "They like their salons, they like their gossip, they're in denial about what's going on." What many US workers do get fired up about are the "discount chop shops" stealing their business. "The technicians that are going to get sick are those girls who are normally of Oriental background. They are not well trained, they don't get the education and they have very poor work habits," says Long Island–based Debbie Doerlamm, who runs beautytech.com. Nguyen isn't surprised: "It's like a cold war between us."

The Collaborative's biggest victory is the Safe Cosmetics Act, passed by the California State Assembly in 2005 after a handful of salon workers testified—as beauty industry lobbyists passed out bags of free makeup. The law, which went into effect January 1, is the first of its kind and requires manufacturers to disclose all potentially harmful product ingredients to the state health department. The State of Washington is considering a similar bill, and advocates hope the state-by-state approach will inspire more companies to voluntarily reformulate all their products. But there's no question that what salon workers really need is a federal law requiring the FDA, EPA and OSHA to hold the beauty industry to a much tougher standard, and more scientific research to pin down exactly what they're up against. Until then, a handful of hard-to-impose "best practices" is the only protection we can offer these workers, who didn't realize that painting nails would mean putting their health on the line. ■

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COMMENT
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 7)

Why is Richardson clicking? Against a field of first-tier candidates (Clinton, Obama and John Edwards) who don't mind savaging the Bush Administration's management of the Iraq imbroglio but who regularly fall short of proposing clear exit strategies, Richardson offers not just a résumé but specifics—and a sense of urgency. His TV ads in the early caucus and primary states identify him as the candidate with "the only plan that pulls every single soldier out of Iraq." As the contender with the most international experience—save, perhaps, hapless Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair Joe Biden—Richardson says it is not merely possible but necessary to end the US military presence in Iraq and to replace it with diplomacy and targeted aid initiatives. Rejecting all the dodges of the frontrunners, Richardson argues, "If we are going to get out, we need to do it now."

For all his much-ballyhooed experience, and for all the sole Hispanic contender's supposed—if largely unconfirmed—appeal to the party's rapidly expanding Latino voting bloc, Richardson recognizes that it is his position on the war that is giving his candidacy traction. Of course, he's glad to discourse on how to tackle the crisis in Darfur and his concerns about Pakistan, and he's more than willing to detail his mainstream progressive positions on everything from gay rights to net neutrality. But the governor's antiwar position is now the primary focus of his media buys, his savvy campaign appearances and his aggressive new direct-mail fundraising appeals to liberal donors. That's smart politics. Richardson's Iraq stance is at once refreshing and reassuring for grassroots Democrats, who polls suggest are increasingly frustrated with the cautious approach of party leaders. In the former UN ambassador they get a candidate who knows his way around the world, who understands the delicacy of diplomacy, who actually negotiated with Saddam Hussein and yet whose statements echo the assessment (if not quite the Department of Peace rhetoric) of antiwar absolutist Dennis Kucinich. As party leaders seek to exclude from debates two outspoken advocates for bringing the troops home, Kucinich and former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel, Richardson's résumé and his poll numbers assure him a place on the stage and an ability to keep prodding the frontrunners to clarify their murky positions on Iraq.

None of this means Richardson is on a fast track to the nomination. He's still playing catch-up in a brutal fundraising competition, and he remains a largely unexamined contender with his share of political baggage—the Energy Department's bungling of the Wen Ho Lee nuclear espionage scandal during Richardson's tenure is an embarrassing footnote, as is his post-Cabinet service on the boards of energy firms with troubling environmental records. But no 2008 Democratic candidate has come further on the basis of a bold stance on the essential issue of the race than Richardson. At the very least, he will make it difficult for Clinton, Obama and Edwards to continue dancing around the core questions of the war. And if the leading Democrats fail to make convincing moves toward withdrawal, Richardson is better positioned than any other candidate to ride that issue to the center of the competition. JOHN NICHOLS

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

better. The promotion of Michael Moore's *Sicko* by the California and Massachusetts nurses associations (and other pro-single-payer unions) is a good example of such work. Unfortunately, because Moore criticizes Kaiser Permanente, a longtime SEIU "partner," and other private insurers, Stern's union has been missing in action from recent healthcare worker rallies around the country, which used *Sicko* as a high-profile teaching tool.

STEVE EARLY

HIT THE ROAD, JACK

Lewiston, Calif.

■ Having followed Jack London for many years, I am looking forward to Jonah Raskin's new book about him ["Kings of the Road," July 30/Aug. 6]. It is important that London was a racist as well as a nationalist. It is also important to see his philosophical side. "Star Rover," for example, is a story that has much to do with the mind-body dualism first noted in Western thought by Plato, and of course the influence of Nietzsche cannot be understated. London was both a product and historical agent of his times and his notion of a nationalist socialism is one that needs to be explored. His adamant imperialist calls for the invasion of Mexico and his belief in the superiority of the white male are all topics that must be seen within the eugenics of the time.

DANNY WEIL

RASKIN REPLIES

Rohnert Park, Calif.

■ Danny Weil is quite right, and in my book I do discuss in depth all the important topics he raises about London—his pernicious racism, the profound influence of Nietzsche on his work and his imperialist ideas. I don't let him off the hook in *The Radical Jack London*, not for a moment. I did not feel, however, that I could cover every aspect of him in my essay about *The Road* and *On the Road* and the connections between the two Jacks, London and Kerouac. In addition, there is little if any racism and few imperialist ideas in *The Road*, and there are times when in fact London overcame his racism and talked about the brotherhood of man, and meant it, and believed in equality between men and women, too. London contradicted himself again and again. He is a profoundly flawed American writer and a tragic figure, too. Most authors who have written about London have not seen his contradictions, the weaknesses as well as strengths. I look at the whole man. I urge Weil to read the forthcoming book and get the full picture.

JONAH RASKIN

KEEP YOUR CARDS TO YOURSELF!

Munich, Germany

■ In the September 24 "Letters" column, reader Michael Coogan says he puts *Nation* subscription cards in right-wing books in his local bookstores. As someone who has owned and operated bookshops for twenty-three years (and who has subscribed to *The Nation* for close to thirty years), I feel I can speak for the majority of noncorporate booksellers (and no doubt a lot of corporate ones) when I say that very little pisses me off more than when someone makes my shop the unwitting medium for *any* proselytizing, no matter to what extent I agree or disagree with the message.

Post your opinion or subscription card on the community bulletin board I provide or stand outside my shop with a sandwich board, but keep your religious tracts out of my Darwins, your right-wing malarkey out of my Chomskys and your *Nation* cards out of my big, fat Limbaughs.

JOHN BROWNER
The Munich Readery

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Root and Branch

IAN HACKING

First the bright side. The anti-Darwin movement has racked up one astounding achievement. It has made a significant proportion of American parents care about what their children are taught in school. And this is not a question of sex or salacious novels; the parents want their children to be taught the truth. None of your fancy literary high jinks here, with truth being "relative." No, this is about the real McCoy.

According to a *USA Today*/Gallup poll conducted this year, more than half of Americans believe God created the first human beings less than 10,000 years ago. Why should they pay for schools that teach the opposite? These people have a definite and distinct idea in mind. Most of the other half of the population would be hard-pressed to say anything clear or coherent about the idea of evolution that they support, but they do want children to learn what biologists have found out about life on earth. Both sides want children to learn the truth, as best as it is known today.

The debate about who decides what gets taught is fascinating, albeit excruciating for those who have to defend the schools against bunkum. Democracy, as Plato keenly observed, is a pain for those who know better. The public debate about evolution itself, as opposed to whether to teach it, is something else. It is boring, demeaning and insufferably dull.

The arguments that Darwin painstakingly presented in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859) were revolutionary in their day. They continue to astonish and perplex; never take them for granted. Unfortunately, anti-Darwinism keeps playing minor variations on the same negative themes and adds nothing to our understanding of life. Many scientists who are upset by the ongoing lobbying insist that it is bad science or pseudo-science. *Living With Darwin*, Philip Kitcher's brief and cogent manifesto, very rightly disagrees. Anti-Darwinism is, he says, dead science, recapitulating old stuff long abandoned. I prefer to call it degenerating.

I take the word from Imre Lakatos, a philosopher of science who liked to flaunt the aphorisms "Every theory is born refuted" and "Every theory wallows in a sea of anomalies." Both exaggerations have been true of evolutionary theories from the word go, but evolution has gone from strength to strength. Lakatos was a great rationalist, but following his hero Karl Popper, he did not think that theories are good when they are established as true. His unit of evaluation was the research program rather than the theory. A rational program is, he said, "progressive" in that it constantly reacts to counterexamples and difficulties by producing new theories that overcome old hurdles. When challenged it does not withdraw into some safe corner but explains new difficulties with an even riskier, richer and bolder story about nature. Degenerate programs paint themselves into smaller and smaller corners, skirting problems they'd prefer not to face. They seldom or never have a new, positive explanation of anything. In short, they teach us nothing.

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

LIVING WITH DARWIN: Evolution, Design, and the Future of Faith.
By Philip Kitcher.
Oxford. 192 pp. $20.

IN THE BEGINNING: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolution Movement.
By Michael Lienesch.
North Carolina. 360 pp. $34.95.

THE EDGE OF EVOLUTION: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism.
By Michael Behe.
Free Press. 321 pp. $28.

THE CREATIONISTS: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design.
By Ronald L. Numbers.
Harvard. 606 pp. Paper $21.95.

A RELIGIOUS ORGY IN TENNESSEE: A Reporter's Account of the Scopes Monkey Trial.
By H.L. Mencken.
Melville. 206 pp. $16.95.

Ian Hacking, the author of The Taming of Chance *and other books, is an honorary professor at the Collège de France.*

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There is no one philosophy of science that fully accounts for the evolving body of practices we call the sciences. I would not want to apply Lakatos's model indiscriminately. It is a colorful way to point to the difference between the history of evolutionary biology since Darwin and anti-Darwin posturing that explains nothing. Anti-Darwinism is not pseudo-science or even dead science so much as degenerate science—and that, in pretty much the explicit sense, I owe to Lakatos.

The Discovery Institute, a conservative think tank, states that "neo-Darwinism" posits "the existence of a single Tree of Life with its roots in a Last Universal Common Ancestor." That tree of life is enemy number one, for it puts human beings in the same tree of descent as every other kind of organism, "making a monkey out of man," as the rhetoric goes. Enemy number two is "the sufficiency of small-scale random variation and natural selection to explain major changes in organismal form and function." This is the doctrine that all forms of life, including ours, arise by chance. Never underestimate the extraordinary implausibility of both these theses. They are, quite literally, awesome.

The tree of life is one of our most ancient metaphors, recurring and profound. There it is in Eden, firmly planted in Genesis 2:9. It was initially free for all, unlike the infamous tree of knowledge, which grew beside it. Much earlier it was carved in stone on Assyrian monuments. The menorah is a tree with seven branches. The cross itself is a tree of life: Made from the wood of dead trees, it became the symbol of eternal life.

We have been working out uses for tree pictures forever. Family relationships were represented by trees in the sixth century. Genealogical trees had to wait another 300 years. But then the Tree of Jesse, showing the ancestry of Christ, grew into vivid displays on medieval glass and illustrated texts. In the eighteenth century Linnaeus and his fellow naturalists classified species and genera of plants in a hierarchical way that can lend itself to representation by a tree. Nineteenth-century Victorians were obsessed with family trees, perhaps because the prosperous ones were worried that their interlocking marriages made their pedigrees all too close to incestuous. One of those gentlemen, Charles Darwin, put it all together: "All true classification is genealogical; that community of descent is the hidden bond which naturalists have been unconsciously seeking."

A genealogical tree of life thereby became the symbol of the theory of evolution by natural selection. We used to rely on the shapes of organisms and their parts in order to construct an ancestral tree. We now use molecular genetics to trace relations. Four years ago Richard Dawkins, Darwin's eloquent though abrasive champion, announced that by 2050 we should have completed "the one true tree of life, the unique pattern of evolutionary branchings that actually happened." That is exactly what sticks in the craw of all those who doubt the theories that descend from Darwin.

I myself take the tree of life in Genesis as a wonderful intimation of things to come. Like all the ancient commentators, I read it as allegory. Those who read it as revealed truth should see that it laid out the road to follow, right from the start, in human speculation about the mysteries and miracles of life. Those who think that Genesis is just another old book should marvel that its authors got it right, in the very beginning, planting the tree of life in the human mind.

Should not Darwin's defenders celebrate the difficulties of evolutionary theory, making plain that it is a growing and vital organism?

Not surprisingly, the central chapter of Kitcher's book is "One Tree of Life." He does an exemplary job of showing how apt the metaphor is, as a way of representing knowledge about the origin of the species. Nevertheless, it is useful to reflect on difficulties in the present, rather than successes in the past. They arise precisely because the evolutionary program is "progressive" in Lakatos's sense. Anti-Darwinists love to repeat news of difficulties. They say, "We told you so; it is just a bunch of guesswork." Hence defenders of the faith, like Kitcher, do not like to dwell on present problems, for fear of giving succor to the foe.

I wonder if they should not instead celebrate the difficulties, making plain that evolutionary theory is a living, growing, vital organism, while anti-Darwinism is lifeless, if not, in Kitcher's word, dead. In my opinion the arrogant religion-baiters—yes, Richard Dawkins comes to mind, but others are worse—do a disservice to their cause by making evolutionary theory seem so cut and dried (viz. dead), when it is a blooming, buzzing, confusing delight, finding out more about the world every day. With anti-Darwinians fabricating a "controversy," it helps to see what a real scientific controversy is like, with each competing conjecture piling on new research methods, new explanations, new questions, new failures and new successes.

It is, for example, splendidly difficult to draw a definitive tree of life. I shall mention just two open questions. First, man and monkey. Kitcher well explains that at the species level, chimpanzees are the closest, genetically, to humans. But it is not wholly clear how to put gorillas, chimpanzees and humans on a tree. On balance, at present, the most probable tree has species X splitting into gorillas on one branch and species Y on another; species Y splits into chimps and people. But some molecular evidence suggests that X splits into Y and chimps, with Y splitting into gorillas and people. Another tree suggested by other molecular evidence is X evolving into Y and humans, with Y evolving into gorillas and chimps. A paper in *Nature* in 2006 proposed an unusual resolution to the conundrum: Early on, there was a lot of hybridization between humans and chimpanzees!

The DNA record does not give us a tidy tree because it encodes a lot of slightly different evolutionary histories in kindred animals, covering a very short span of recent time. With gorillas, chimps and humans we are talking no more than 8 million years. We may not end up with a tree even for the part that most interests us, the one on which humans hang. A thicket or bush, yes, but a clean-limbed tree, perhaps not. Thus the old question of the missing link has been transformed into a series of new questions that have immeasurably added to our understanding and leave us asking for more. That is the mark of a progressive research program.

There is a deep reason underlying the difficulty just mentioned. The ideas of species, genera and the rest of the taxa are invaluable in practical botany, ecology, the fisheries, etc., for sorting living organisms as they are now. Classes of living things really are distinct. But historically they are on a continuum. The species, as distinct and definite entities, fade away. I am no expert on Darwin, but it seems to me that he saw this very clearly.

When, thanks to Darwin, we turned from classification *at a time* to classification *over time in the long haul*, species began to drop out except as a convenient way to distinguish bits of the fossil record and match them with present life-forms. Because of the depth of the tree idea in the human mind (yes, back to Genesis and beyond), we have been fixated on the project of arranging definite species, like fruit, on a tree of de-

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scent. To exaggerate, there are no historical species to hang with exactitude. Not even our own, which we narcissistically call *Homo sapiens* (Latin for "wise man"). Anyone who reads *Origin* will notice that Darwin displayed only one curiously abstract tree diagram in that book. Starting in 1866, Ernst Haeckel, Darwin's great advocate in Germany, began to cover pages with exuberant trees of descent, including the first drawn tree of animal evolution. It is as if we have been trying to imitate Haeckel, but Darwin was the wiser man.

The human genome does have an incredible amount of historical information that we have only just begun to decode. Genetic anthropology is the liveliest of the human sciences today. It uses molecular biology to track the movements of peoples across the globe. It is a fabulous continuation of the program begun in another of Darwin's great books, *The Descent of Man* (1871). At the end of his book *In the Beginning*, Michael Lienesch mentions the recently established Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, where children are shown dioramas of Adam and Eve fleeing from the dinosaurs. What a striking contrast between progress (genetic anthropology) and degeneration (fantasy dioramas of the impossible).

Perhaps we had better not speak of tree diagrams but of tree-ish diagrams or, to be Latinate, arborescent diagrams, as being the upshot of Darwin today. Even so—and here is my promised second open question—the representation of life on such diagrams may work well only for human-sized organisms: roughly speaking, from whales to mites, redwoods to lichen. Even that is misleading: Once we get down to fungi, classification is a mess. The action in evolutionary research today is, however, far below that, at the bacterial level. One fascinating idea is horizontal (or lateral) gene transfer. Bacteria, which don't have sex, probably pass genetic material from one to another, quite indifferent to who is descended from whom—from one species of bacterium to another. This idea was first circulated by C.R. Woese in 1977, and it has blossomed into a vigorous research program. By 2000 *Scientific American* had published a popular essay, "Uprooting the Tree of Life." It could be that the earliest life-forms had distinct origins; these then shared genetic material by passing it sideways, making life as a whole a bit more viable on a nasty planet. No unique primal ancestor after all.

Some biologists are pretty skeptical and doubt that horizontal transfer, if it exists, is a big deal. More radical souls are guessing that even mites and lichen benefit from horizontal transfer, via bacteria. (And maybe that's the problem with fungi.) You can sensibly take bets either way. I would bet that what we find out about bacteria in the next decade, including horizontal gene transfer, will wonderfully enrich our understanding of life and its origins. I might be ignorantly backing the wrong horse. Evolutionary theories are rich in open questions. That is what makes them so exciting.

Genetically modified organisms are here to stay. An untreelike chapter in evolutionary history is unrolling right before our eyes.

Contrast that with pseudo-controversy and take, for example, Michael Behe, a professor at Lehigh University who must be the most ingenious and prolific anti-Darwinian biologist at work today. My use of "anti-Darwin" follows him. Unlike Ronald Numbers or Michael Lienesch, I do not speak of the antievolution movement or of creationism. This is because Behe says, in effect, "Sure, I believe in evolution by natural selection—it just doesn't do all it is supposed to." In his capacity as a biologist he does not officially argue for special acts of creation. So you cannot call him antievolution or creationist. But he is undeniably anti-Darwin. His first book was *Darwin's Black Box* (1996). His latest book is *The Edge of Evolution: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism*. The label "anti-Darwin" seems the right umbrella term for creationism, antievolutionism—and Behe.

In his first book, Behe makes his case against evolutionary theory by taking up the eye argument. Even Aristotle was astonished by the eye, whose parts developed together so that an animal could see. After 1859 people asked how all the parts could have evolved before the survival value of seeing was in place. Behe applies the argument to a question about the complex devices that enable bacteria to get around. (Kitcher summarizes this quite well.) If you like, Behe has raised the number of open questions about evolution from a million to a million and one. We now know quite a lot about the eye, but we are only just beginning to figure out bacterial evolution. So it is a good bet that his problem will stay around for a while. But that is not scientific controversy. There is no give and take of explanation and counterexample, no new methodology, no new anything—just the same old question dressed up in slightly new clothes.

The same is true of Behe's new book, which restates the "not enough time for evolution to work" objection. That arose when we were debating the age of the earth, 140 years ago. Behe looks at examples such as the retrovirus associated with AIDS, in which new generations appear every few minutes, a chance for the evolution of the retrovirus to hurtle ahead. It does not, or so he argues (not too convincingly, to my mind, but leave that aside). Maybe he has increased the number of open questions to a million and two. Once again, we get a recycled objection in slightly new packaging, and no new ideas. It reminds us of the degeneracy of anti-Darwins. Can't they do better than that? Apparently not.

Theories of evolution have been evolving ever since Jean-Baptiste Lamarck began lecturing on the subject in 1800. "Founder of the evolutionary theory," it says on his grand statue at the entry to the botanic gardens in Paris. That is a good reminder that Darwin, marvelous thinker and naturalist that he was, is only part of an ongoing story. The pedigree of evolution passes through Darwin's natural selection, through the synthesis with Mendel's genetics, through the idea of mutation—but also through the statistician's observation that you can get a lot of speciation without mutation, by sheer combinatorial chance, called genetic drift. Perhaps horizontal gene transfer will be established in a future history of evolutionary thought. It is already a commonplace of biotechnology. We used to cross strains of cattle to produce the breeds we are familiar with. Fine animals in farm fairs have pedigrees that can be as neatly drawn as a family tree. But today entire kingdoms are crossed: Fish genes are put into tobacco plants to help them resist disease. Thus the end twigs on the tree of life are being grafted to one another with consequences that cannot be foreseen. Genetically modified organisms are here to stay. A new and very untreelike chapter in evolutionary history is unrolling before our eyes.

Kitcher's long final chapter addresses a pressing question that is seldom asked. Why, when we are bathed in the innumerable implausible and often incomprehensible results of modern science, is Darwin the bogeyman? A short version of Kitcher's answer is that we need the consolations of religion, and they are untenable in the light of Darwin. And why does anti-Darwinism thrive only in America? Because life there is so cruel and com-

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petitive, says Kitcher, that Americans need extra consolation.

I simplify, but I found his discussion too simplistic. We have to summon sociologists and historians to point the way. Why has anti-Darwinism thrived in the United States for almost a century? How has it been so successful? Until 1918 the United States was much like the rest of the industrialized world. After some initial bickering and pious rethinking after 1859, an evolutionary account of life was taken for granted. The age of the earth and natural selection were accommodated by all of the churches that took notice of such topics. That's how it is with religions: They evolve to fit their contemporary worlds. Every expert and most interested lay people knew there were endless problems in the Darwinian research program, but the overall project was accepted. Science and Christianity made their peace.

Then something happened. A series of twelve pamphlets called *The Fundamentals* was printed in Chicago, from 1910 to 1915. After the First World War ended, the "fundamentalists"—those touting *The Fundamentals*—pushed anti-Darwinism and became a major intellectual and political force in America. The movement has had its ups and downs since then, but with an astounding run of ups. Fifteen years ago Ronald Numbers published an encyclopedic history of the phenomenon. He told of the initial hostility to the theory of natural selection, followed by its almost universal acceptance by the end of the nineteenth century; and then *The Fundamentals*, followed by vehement public denunciation of evolution. Numbers has now updated his history, *The Creationists*, with two chapters about intelligent design. He has thus written a great reference work but does not fully address the how and why questions. Michael Lienesch tries to do so, using contemporary methodology for studying social movements and agenda-setting.

The general message can be summed up by twisting a line from Edison. The success of anti-Darwinism has been 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration—endless committee work, backroom organizing and networking to support the preaching. The successes are not in any way accidental or inspirational. Anti-Darwinists have been well funded. Three million copies of *The Fundamentals* were mailed in their first five years. The heartland in the beginning was not, as is so often imagined, a rural backwater. It was very often Chicago businessmen whom Numbers and Lienesch identify, men taking time out from building the great traditional corporations that Chicago gave to the world, or from commanding the skyscrapers that continue to astonish tourists. The Moody Bible Institute, granddaddy of them all, sits at the corner of LaSalle Drive and Chicago Avenue. When I was a child in a Canadian public school, I avidly watched its extraordinary nature movies about life and growth; they gave us a break from the teachers. Snatches of them have stayed with me the rest of my life as an atheist.

Lienesch is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the successive waves of anti-Darwinism, right up to intelligent design. Kitcher, as I said, reflects on why Americans need God. He mentions the moving story of a noted agnostic scholar who found comfort in a great New York cathedral, after she had learned that her child would soon die of a horrible disease. A cathedral? Somehow, that is a giveaway. Kitcher's background is Episcopalian (mine, too, for my sins). I think he is just not down to earth enough when he turns to the abiding strengths of religion. I'd like to say his heart is in the right place, unlike the current crop of atheist propagandists, but the trouble is that, as with many Episcopalians, it is more mind than heart. (It takes one to know one.)

As a foreign kibitzer, I would like to repeat what I said at the start about democracy. Movements need perspiration and organization, but they also need uptake by the people. I have no use for anti-Darwinian campaigners, but I do have a lot of respect for popular skepticism. The people do not trust those who present themselves as elite. If you want a sense of the monstrous self-confident complacency of days gone by, read H.L. Mencken's daily reports to the *Baltimore Sun* on the Scopes trial, now reissued under the title *A Religious Orgy in Tennessee*. Or read any of the self-indulgent, virulent atheists in circulation today—Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens being just two. Contrary to their professed intentions, such writers buttress the faithful; their loathsome arrogance shields evangelical churches from doubt. That part of the American population that believes God made man in His own image has a heartfelt contempt for know-it-alls. I am inclined to say, God bless the people, even when they get it wrong.

I have said nothing about the second sticking point for the anti-Darwin movement, that chance variation and natural selection have sufficed to produce the living world as we know it. It is an incredible doctrine. Darwin himself was pretty cautious about

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it. I respect anyone who says he cannot believe it. But that is where one should stay, in a state of disbelief. Once you start arguing against it, you end up being silly.

Intelligent design is silly. It is a refurbished version of the argument advanced at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth by those I call Royal Society divines—important Anglican clergymen, often fellows of the Royal Society of London, the leading scientific institution of the day. The argument at its most concise is known as Bishop Paley's pocket watch. If you found something like a watch in the desert, you would of course suppose it was an artifact of an intelligent watchmaker. Here we find ourselves in an intricate world that we think of as an elaborate mechanism, so there must be an intelligent worldmaker.

The argument had predecessors: that there must be a creator because there is an obvious purpose in the world. That is called the teleological argument, which goes back to antiquity and which is Thomas Aquinas's "Fifth Way" to God. Kant and Hegel thought it the sole rational consideration of merit. But only the English, obsessed by machines, tried to construct an argument based specifically on the fact that the world appears to be very well and intricately designed, a pocket watch on a universal scale. (The "argument from design" is a pretty standard part of American freshman or sophomore philosophy courses, but there is not even a name for it in France, where it seems at best, well, sophomoric.)

There is a problem with the argument, including its most up-to-date versions: It says nothing about the designer. At the end of the teleological argument, the Fifth Way, we learn about the purpose in the world, and purpose requires an agent. Having established a purposeful agent who creates, an Aquinas can exclaim, "And this Being can be only Thou, O Lord!" That does not come so easily at the end of an argument from design. So the world must have a brilliant engineer, a molecular engineer at that, a veritable nanotechnologist. Why think this being has anything to do with any god, Christian or other?

There is the trite ad hominem observation, repeated by Kitcher, that quite a few aspects of the design, even of humans, seem rather imperfect; a reasonably good engineer could have done better. The nasty cynic says, "Why not an absolutely evil genius as designer?" So we get an argument for the existence of the devil at work.

An amused cynic is more fun. Life seems the handiwork of a *mad* designer, who fits several DSM diagnoses from the American Psychiatric Association. He—only a male would do this—is obsessed with intricate details so long as they do not get too much in the way of other devices he concocts. For example, he designs and builds a bird such as the Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*, apt name, that), which annually migrates in a figure-eight pattern across the North and South Atlantic from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back. Brilliant, brilliant design, a navigation system with two routes from pole to pole, sturdy enough to survive earth's cruelest seas—all madly miniaturized in a brain the size of a plum. But why on earth, were it not for a lunatic fascination with design itself? A proof, thus, that the earth with its denizens is the work of a crazed design-freak.

This silly cynicism invites a more attractive thought. Leibniz proposed that the actual world is the one that combines the maximum of variety with the minimum of complexity for its fundamental laws. The "best" world, the world sought by the most intelligent designer, is one that maximizes variety in its phenomena and simplicity of basic law. Such a world has no place for a specific set of plans for the Arctic tern. The upshot is not attractive to those who favor intelligent design. It is in effect a proof that we live in a world of quantum-mechanical laws that are counterintuitive (to humans) but intrinsically simple—a world that, once these laws are in place, is then allowed to evolve out of a very few raw materials by chance and selection into unendingly complex patterns, including life on earth as we know it. It is a fact that you will get complex structures if you just let such systems run.

The wisest designer would choose the governing laws and initial conditions that best capitalized on this mathematical fact. A stupid designer would have to arrange for all the intricate details (the Arctic tern again) that anti-Darwinians eulogize, but an intelligent designer would let chance and natural selection do the work. In other words, in the light of our present knowledge, we can only suppose that *the most intelligent designer* (I do not say there is one) *would have to be a "neo-Darwinian"* who achieves the extraordinary variety of living things by chance. ■

Class Acts

J. HOBERMAN

TRINITY OF PASSION: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade.
By Alan Wald. North Carolina. 319 pp. $34.95.

What is literature? asked Jean-Paul Sartre in 1947. Does a novelist write to make a personal world—or should a novelist write to remake our world? A great generation ago, that was the question. Hopelessly unfashionable, barely remembered, the literature of commitment from the Depression and World War II is less a scandal than an embarrassment—so earnest, so obvious, so hackneyed. As didactic and dogmatic as such "proletarian" or antifascist fiction is, you might wonder if it even deserves to be read, let alone considered to be literature—unless, of course, you believe that literature is something other than literature.

Alan Wald may not subscribe to the Hegelian reasoning of Sartre's assertion that writing is the means by which a society reflects on its condition. But for him, as for Sartre, literature is primarily a social endeavor—a field of political action. Introducing *Trinity of Passion: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade*, Wald maintains that literature is not simply a province governed by the canonical authority of a few acknowledged great authors. Literature is larger than that! The significance of the literature of commitment, he argues, may lie in the "substructure… where half-forgotten writers who variously passed through the Communist experience left ineradicable marks."

These "cultural workers" (writers of proletarian literature, themselves retroactively branded proletarians by Professor Wald), the "rank and file of the literary Left" (but also a few of the commissars, including the infamous V.J. Jerome, chair of the American Communist Party's cultural commission), are the subject of Wald's ongoing reclamation project. Although the

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territory has been mapped out by two standard texts, Daniel Aaron's *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism* and Walter Rideout's *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900–1954*, both of which are still in print, Wald's enterprise is distinguished by his sympathy for his writers' existential struggle and his expansive notion of the field.

Trinity of Passion is the middle panel of a triptych initiated in 2002 with *Exiles From a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left*. Vague sense of an exotic bestiary: The title of *Exiles* is borrowed from a posthumous collection of poems by the sick, starving and extremely obscure Sol Funaroff, whom Wald dubs the "Apollinaire of the Proletariat." The book itself begins with a portrait of a "strange communist," namely, the pulp novelist turned Hollywood screenwriter Guy Endore, who, the script for *The Story of GI Joe* notwithstanding, will be longest remembered for his 1933 best-selling costume horror novel, *The Werewolf of Paris*, strategically set against the backdrop of the 1871 Commune. Endore's most enduring work may be the most extreme and fanciful example of politically conscious paperback writing that Wald discusses, but it is by no means the only one.

Wald similarly opens *Trinity of Passion* (even more a collection of linked literary case histories, few of which are well-known) with a look at the "strange career" of another obscure toiler in the vineyards of pop culture, Len Zinberg—a Jewish fellow traveler who, writing under the name Ed Lacy, thrived throughout the '50s and '60s as the author of mass-market detective novels that featured a black detective and were pervaded by radical politics. As physicist Paul Dirac theorized antimatter, so Wald has discovered the anti–Mickey Spillane.

Writers like Funaroff, Endore and Zinberg are, in a sense, characters in that novelistic history Murray Kempton called "part of our time." In the crucible of the Great Depression, as Wald argued in *Exiles From a Future Time*, shards of literary Modernism fused with a new and dramatic sense of civic emergency. Wald's first books—including a literary biography of James T. Farrell, a study of the poets John Wheelwright and Sherry Mangan and the near-definitive account of literary Trotskyism, *The New York Intellectuals*—were concerned with varieties of Trotskyist Modernism. With *Exiles*, he embarked upon what one might assume were for him the more treacherous currents of American Stalinism and the Popular Front—chroni-

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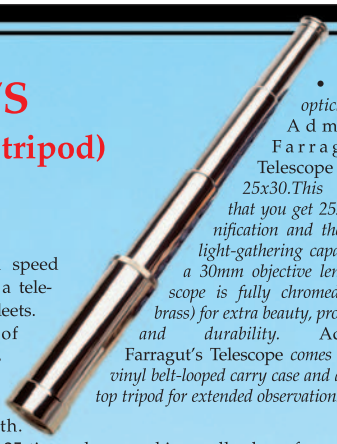

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cling a literary crew whose allegiance to a social muse he, unlike Kempton, displays an unexpected degree of empathy for.

Exiles's major tour de force is the chapter "Inventing Mike Gold," a startling rehabilitation of the Communist Party's leading literary hack (and hatchet man), remembered today largely for his contribution to the mythology of the Lower East Side, *Jews Without Money* (1930), one of the few proletarian novels to earn a spot in the academic canon. Wald downplays Gold's greatest hit to present him as a lapsed romantic Modernist, linking him to Walt Whitman and even the Beats. (One of the book's more fascinating secondary narratives recounts the way Whitman, the American poet most admired by leftists, was transformed into a Popular Front icon. In Gold's 1935 "Ode to Walt Whitman," Wald notes, the poet "is likened to a reborn Christ, to the spirit of communism, to nature, and to Bolshevism...serv[ing] as the multipurpose icon of Gold's multiethnic cultural mosaic.")

Wald by no means ignores Gold's work. Still, cognizant of (if not necessarily endorsing) Kempton's contempt for talent sacrificed on the altar of social revolution, he is almost always more interested in the drama of lives than those of literature, mapping a "humanscape" populated by writers committed to political commitment. Thus, *Exiles*'s cover features Gold in action, addressing a 1930 May Day rally. The denizens of Waldsville are often quite colorful. *Exiles* featured such rare birds as the forgotten Woody Guthrie analogue Donald Lee West, as well as Communist poet Joy Davidman, who was married to "radical folksinger" William Lindsay Gresham before she decamped to England to change the life of C.S. Lewis. *Trinity*, which is more concerned with prose than poetry, devotes half a chapter to Lauren Gilfillan, whose precocious (and once-celebrated) nonfiction novel—a firsthand account of the Great Coal Strike of 1931 called *I Went to Pit College*—although more straightforward (and ironic), prefigures by several years the art reportage of the James Agee–Walker Evans classic *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Actually a graduate of Smith College as well as a natural bohemian, the elfin Gilfillan became famous at 25 and suffered a spectacular nervous breakdown a year later—never to write again. (The chapter on her, which also discusses the far better-known Henry Roth, is called "Disappearing Acts.") Wald finds this lost author fascinating; her life, a battle against the constraints of class, gender and social mores, as well as mental instability, has the richness of literature. Although Wald doesn't say so, Gilfillan seems as much a creature of the 1960s as the '30s, not least in her ambiguous relationship to the (old) left: "Clearly, she was sympathetic to the Communists' aims, but she was also satirically critical of the Party members she depicted." (*I Went to Pit College* ends with the author musing that "words are such mockery" and, in deadpan self-parody, pondering a crumpled bit of poetry she'd torn from the *Daily Worker*.)

For the most part, however, *Trinity* is devoted to those writers who were defined, and who defined themselves, by their opposition to fascism—mainly African-Americans or American Jews who came of age during the 1930s and, not infrequently, wrote about one another, fellow travelers on the Communist road to twentieth-century Americanism. "In retrospect," Wald allows, "the literature of the antifascist crusade, intermittent in its quality, recounts many stories pivotal to apprehending the lives of idealistic yet diversely flawed men and women committed to the revolutionary fashioning of a better world in the mid-twentieth century."

These were writers with a particular set of goals and standards, operating in the orbit of a political entity with its own culture—even its own counterculture and counter-counterculture. They were also writers who had to defend themselves against sternly retrograde Communist literary criticism, including the "steady stream of stern pronouncements against…'difficulty.'" (This was not always monolithic. Somewhat counterintuitively, the *Daily Worker* dispensed with dogma to hail party member Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* as a masterpiece when it was published in 1934.)

Explicating an unstable amalgam of literary ambition and pro-Communism in the light, as well as against the shifting terrain, of left institutions, American public opinion and the writers' personal politics, Wald identifies several overlapping narratives, notably the African-American wartime conflict over the "Double V"—victory over fascism abroad and racism at home. Those concerned with the latter include Chester Himes, John Oliver Killens and Ann Petry, whose 1946 novel *The Street*, a vivid account of an impoverished single mother in wartime Harlem, was based on Petry's work as a reporter for Adam Clayton Powell's left-wing newsweekly *People's Voice*.

Another narrative concerns the autobiographical Spanish Civil War fictions of Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans Alvah Bessie, Milton Wolff and William Herrick; for Wald, these novels constitute "a hitherto neglected segment in Jewish American cultural history." Grim, grizzled and jaunty, Bessie strikes an appropriately battle-hardened pose on *Trinity*'s cover. Wald sees Tough Jews, like those who populate Bessie's *Men in Battle*, Herrick's *Hermanos!* and Wolff's *Another Hill*, as an alternative to the traditional Jewish *Menschlichkeit* that figures in the work of novelist Albert Maltz and playwright Irwin Shaw, two Popular Front middlebrows who would gain Hollywood contracts and be named as Communists in the course of the November 1947 hearings held by the House Un-American Activities Commit-

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Jeffrey Yang

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tee. (Maltz, one of the Hollywood Ten, actually was a Communist; Shaw was only described as such by panicky studio boss Jack Warner.)

A poignant or perhaps pitiful figure, Maltz was at once greatly esteemed and irreparably damaged by the Communist movement—a career trajectory that he seemed to anticipate in a pair of well-received early novels sketching out a particular gospel of social sacrifice. *The Underground Stream* (1940), lugubriously subtitled *An Historical Novel of a Moment in the American Winter*, celebrated the organization of automobile workers in the mid '30s, complete with the martyrdom of a Communist labor organizer at the hands of American fascists; Maltz's wartime follow-up, *The Cross and the Arrow* (1944), was a cinematically structured account of a German worker's individual and fatal act of defiance against the Nazi regime. More widely known than any of his books is Maltz's personal passion—namely the literary "affair" he triggered in mid-February 1946, some months after Earl Browder's ouster from the Communist leadership, which was full-blown by the time of Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech.

Published in the largely Communist weekly *New Masses*, Maltz's essay "What Shall We Ask of Writers?" attacked the doctrinaire notion of art as a weapon and, among other things, defended Richard Wright and James T. Farrell (anathema as a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party): "Writers must be judged by their work, and not by the committees they join," Maltz insisted. For this, he was immediately denounced by Mike Gold in the *Daily Worker*; Sam Sillen piled on with a six-part rebuttal, "Art and Politics." (Wald notes that Sillen cited *The Street* as exemplifying the danger inherent in Maltz's line. For all its undeniable literary qualities, Petry's novel was insufficiently positive; it neglected to indicate any "genuinely affirmative pressures in the Negro community," namely the CP.)

After six weeks and a surprisingly lively debate in the pages of *New Masses*, Maltz retracted his essay with a piece that appeared simultaneously in the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses* and was timed to a public apology at a Communist-sponsored meeting of Hollywood types, unambiguously titled "Art As a Weapon." Maltz's reputation never recovered—although Petry's deserves to be further burnished. Her notion of the people proved prophetic: *The Street* is still in print and, according to its publisher, has sold more than a million copies.

What, then, is Wald's project? Stretching things a bit, one could use his work to assemble a respectable mid-twentieth-century canon of pop Modernist and social realist left literature, including such former Communists and onetime fellow-traveling progressives as John Dos Passos, Ralph Ellison, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, Ann Petry, Henry Roth, Richard Wright and even Ernest Hemingway (although for Wald, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is "one of those recurrent instances where it is nearly impossible to disentangle judgments of literary quality from the political questions"). The second and third tiers would be even more extensive.

But the formation of such an alternative canon isn't Wald's goal. He makes clear his admiration for Andrew Hemingway's analogous 2002 illustrated history *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926–1956*, which, illuminating as it is, only manages to find two near first-rate American artists—Jacob Lawrence and Alice Neel—who lived and painted as Communists. What matters in Wald's book, as in Hemingway's, has less to do with the significance of an artist's *oeuvre* than with his or her attempt to bridge the gap between the work and the life.

What Wald calls the substructure is something of an alternate universe. In the early '50s, he writes, "amidst the onerous Cold War years of the McCarthyite anti-radical witch hunt, two mammoth first novels by African Americans, each nearly 600 pages, were published to acclaim in the popular press." The authors were near-exact contemporaries. Both had a long intimacy with Communist politics and were greatly influenced by Richard Wright (although they responded quite differently to the challenge of *Native Son*). Their novels dealt not only with the migration from the rural South to the urban North but also with African-American radical politics during the 1930s. Upending conventional wisdom regarding the singularity of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Wald sets this Modernist (and anti-Communist) masterpiece against John Oliver Killens's social-realist epic *Youngblood*. Leading with his chin, he further proposes Killens's 1963 *And Then We Heard the Thunder* as a "major contender" for the finest US novel of World War II.

Similarly, a hitherto ignored Dos Passosian tradition in American literature culminates in the curiosity that is the multivolume collage autobiography *Scenes From the Life of an American Jew*, written in the 1980s by novelist John Sanford. (Sanford was a childhood friend of Nathanael West, who had

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suggested he change his family name from Shapiro to Starbuck.) And in something of a coup, *Trinity* teases out a "missing chapter" of Arthur Miller's political past, hiding in plain sight or, rather, in the microfilmed pages of *New Masses*, where, from the spring of 1945 through the spring of 1946, Miller wrote on theater under the name Matt Wayne. (Needless to say, mention of this episode is nowhere to be found in Miller's 1987 autobiography, *Timebends*.)

Typically generous to the Stalinoid foibles of his subjects, Wald notes without disapproval that "Miller felt politically at home with the left turn of the post-Browder Communist Party," and although he privately sympathized with Maltz, he did nothing, at least publicly, to support him. *Timebends* makes clear that Miller's major issue during this period was anti-Semitism and the danger of an indigenous American fascism. And yet Arthur Miller, Communist theater critic—haven't we always suspected it might be so?

Since the choir no longer exists, Wald can hardly be accused of preaching to it. Much of the fiction he explicates may be of interest only to specialists. But it's just this complicating of the received canon and deepening of individual political conflicts that makes one look forward to the final panel of his triptych, to be called *The American Night: The Literary Left in the Era of the Cold War*. ■

The Logic of Survival

In order to preserve his way of life
Odysseus threaded the necks
of twenty faithless servant girls
and hung them in his courtyard
above the slick blood of their
newly slain lovers. His wife
was true but his dog was gone
and that was already too much.

Charged to preserve his race
Aeneas trod heavily over
the Aegean. "I will not let this
change who I am." But it did.
The passive lover turned bloodthirsty
killer as soon as he set foot
on the right plot of land.
With age and experience
he had learned the essential:
when time is running out
it's best to ignore your conscience.

It is easy to leave scorched earth
in your wake if you don't look back.
There must be no change or loss.
And therefore preemptive death
to all who might destroy us. It's a
mistake, for we know that those who
cheat fate will meet their fathers
at the crossroads and walk
away with blood-stained hands,
mad for power, cursing God
and blaming the crime on some
petty criminal's sad bid for survival.
So loss will come and we will die
from one generation to the next.
Landscapes won't be recognized
and humans will adapt, because
that's what they're born to do. The
world is no longer a chess board,
surprise attacks are few. All can see
the long view: those who would
preserve us will instead destroy us.

Or die awaiting trial. Footnoted
statesmen, who answer fear with fear,
whose solution is destruction of
the people, who, no longer adequately
armed, become internal spies,
gathering evidence and rhetoric,
hoping against hope for an appeal
to a locality or figure on whom
to pin the burden of responsibility.

For mere riches constant vigilance
is too high a cost. It turns men into dogs.
Odysseus left his gate unmanned
for twenty years. How right or
righteous he must have been to so
easily reclaim his kingdom: a few
justified murders and all sleep tight.
While Aeneas, according to Geoffrey,
began the British Empire—which in turn
begat this kind of just war, faithless
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a future in which we will not be.

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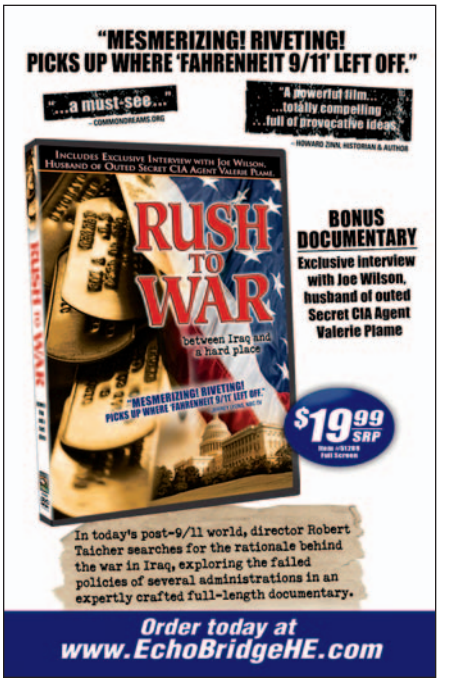
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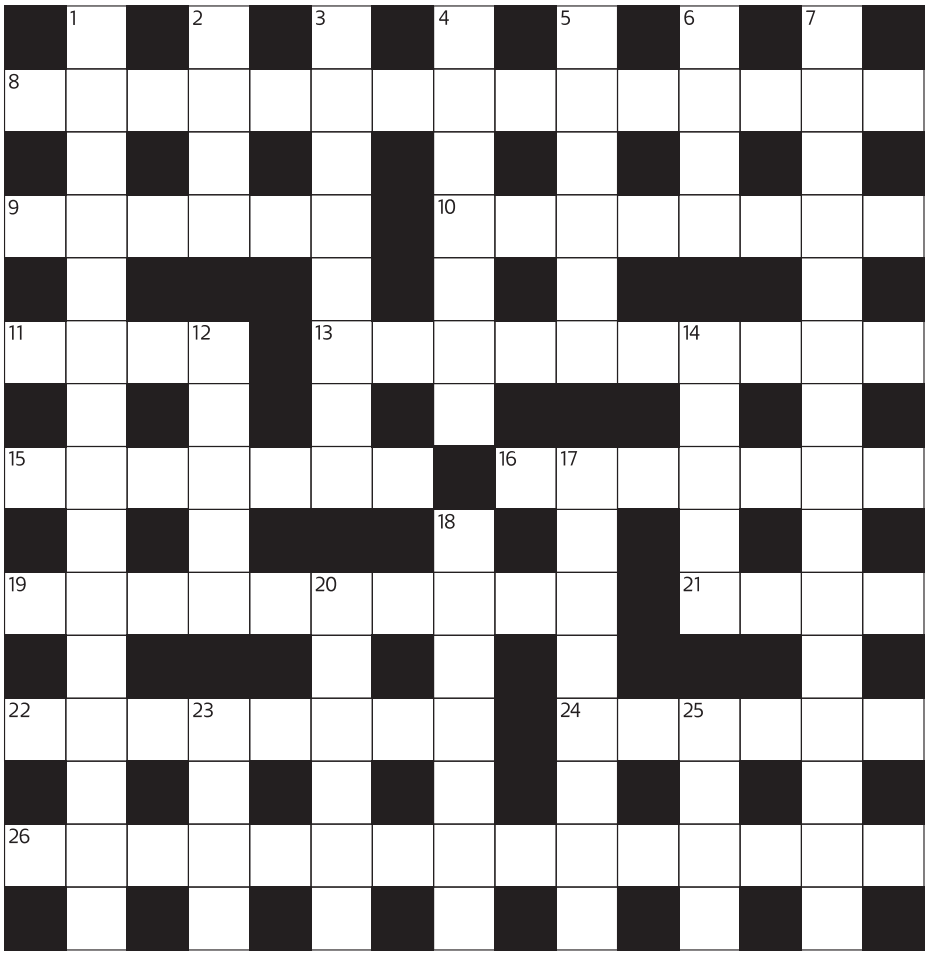


ACROSS

8 Usually a softball pitcher displays such "dirty work." (15)

9 Camp meals are always such a chore to clean up. (6)

10 Birds don't quite have the sound of a cat—but this might be pretty in the garden. (8)

11 and **2** down Listen, getting top ratings encourages. (8)

13 Not taped when the Roman returns with a gangster type—but it's how you get by. (10)

15 Oh, it's back—and is wrong with a rye sling—especially when on your feet! (7)

16 They may be on mortarboards, and sat less awkwardly. (7)

19 Doesn't play it straight, bless me!—which is wrong when little Sidney starts out the wrong way. (10)

21 How some say they want their eggs over—which is not difficult. (4)

22 Such an irregular fighter sounds like a real beast! (8)

24 I'd corn to shuck—just like a Swede! (6)

26 Not just a simple tailor—but you might see he has a beat. (15)

DOWN

1 Married this way, without benefit of clergy? (15)

2 see 11 across

3 The painter had to use his lips to be one. (8)

4 Valence—could be found in a place completely surrounded. (7)

5 Certainly not a fair-weather bird by reputation! (6)

6 Where we don't want such blame to fall? (4)

7 Only faintly resembling the supposedly best type of music and such—and "fake" in a musical sense. (6-9)

12 See 25

14 Reputedly a waste creator, as the makings of it show. (5)

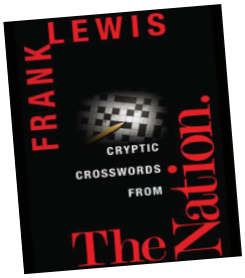
17 Tip over the basin—it contains pretty powerful stuff! (8)

18 Roosevelt—the diplomat, author and lecturer. (7)

20 Mother with pests is what Old Abe said we should give to nobody. (6)

23 Scream and holler! Yet some people prefer to go by it! (4)

25 and **12** The remainder comes down like cats and dogs, but holds back. (9)



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